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**Epilogue I:  
Court Upholds FCC Net Neutrality Rulings**

## **Digital Societies and the Internet** **Epilogue I: Court Upholds FCC Net Neutrality Rulings**

**This series is written as a follow up to subjects discussed in the book, *Digital Societies and the Internet: What the Present is Bringing to the Future*, available online at Amazon.com and B&N.com**

**For Epilogue I, see the following material in the book for background information:**

**Chapter 6: Internet User Content: Protect or Expose?**

**Chapter 14: Privacy Revisited**

**Chapter 21: FCC Regulations on Net Neutrality**

**July 11, 2016**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled that high-speed Internet service can be defined as a utility. In a 2-1 decision, a three-judge panel found in favor of the rules published by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2015.

The ruling will surely be contested by the broadband carriers, such as AT&T, Verizon, and Frontier Communications. These companies control the physical channels (cable, wire, wireless, optical) that run from the Internet to customers' sites. They have claimed that the FCC rulings go beyond its mandate, but this court disagreed.

The likely outcome of the court ruling will be more government supervision and policing of the broadband carriers. It also supports the FCC's contention that broadband Internet is a utility. As such, it must be equally accessible to all Americans, and cannot be priced or offered on a selected basis to Internet users.

If the court had ruled otherwise, the broadband carriers would have more latitude in pricing and tailoring their offerings. Because of the history in America of poor broadband Internet service (at least, in many areas of the country), I wrote in the book that something was needed to spur the existing broadband carriers to improve their systems. I favor more competition over more regulation, but the cost and logistics for other companies to get into the broadband business is prohibitive to all but the most affluent enterprises. (As examples, Google, and Apple.) It requires the installation in neighborhoods of cable and/or wireless systems, all quite expensive.

As cited in the book several times, some broadband carriers are also in the business of content distribution. As such, they are in a position to promote their own products over those of content providers who do not control the broadband channels (such a Netflix).

FCC Chairman, Tom Wheeler, issued this statement after the court announced its decision:

After a decade of debate and legal battles, [the] ruling affirms the commission's ability to enforce the strongest possible protection---both on fixed and mobile networks--- that will ensure the internet remains open, now and in the future.

If a pro-big business administration comes to power, I expect the current FCC rulings to be changed to favor AT&T, Verizon, Frontier, and other companies that own the media, to the

detriment of non-broadband carriers, such as Google, YouTube, and Facebook---not to mention the average consumer.