

Ron McCue: Nation should reject calls to regulate Internet

By Ron McCue - Idaho Statesman

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Idaho is coming to increasingly rely on the high-tech industry to provide good jobs for our state. As traditional industries such as logging, mining and farming employ fewer people, more Idahoans are finding work with firms on the cutting edge of our nation's technology sector. Even more are relying on the Internet to improve their businesses, shop from home, and do a variety of other things hard to imagine even 10 years ago.

For this progress to continue, however, our nation needs to reject calls to impose regulations on the Internet. The folks who live in Idaho — and all Americans — need the Internet to be free to develop and grow in ways that will meet the needs of consumers, not the whims of regulators.

As someone who works in Idaho's telecommunications industry and employs 40 people in this state, I know the increasingly important role that high-tech services are playing here.

My company has expanded cable television and wireless service across much of southern Idaho in response to consumer demand for the latest technology for their homes and businesses. My company also contributes \$20 million to the state's economy. Many other entrepreneurs out there are making similar investments in Idaho's communications networks.

We are able to have this impact because Idahoans are realizing how much the Internet can do to help their businesses stay competitive in this global economy. They also like the benefits that come from being able to shop for a wide variety of products at home, download thousands of songs, and keep in contact with work and with relatives around the world.

The ways we currently use the Internet are only the tip of the iceberg. Just as Web sites like YouTube were unimaginable in the mid-'90s, in the future we will have the ability to do so much more through the Internet. For example, being able to monitor your health via broadband-enabled telemedicine will greatly improve the medical care received by those who live in rural areas, often hundreds of miles away from the nearest specialist.

Some politicians in Washington are threatening this development, though. They are calling for the government to impose the country's first regulation of the Internet. This would slow the investment and innovation that makes telemedicine and other Internet-driven advances widespread.

Rep. Bill Sali recognizes in other areas of the economy that too much government regulation is bad for both businesses and consumers. I hope he can see the same principles at work when certain interest groups in Washington, D.C. call for imposing federal controls on the Internet.

Idahoans need the Internet to continue growing in leaps and bounds as it has been — without government interference. Broadband's potential is simply too great to turn over control of the Internet to federal regulators.

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