



## **McCormick Says No to Network Neutrality**

USTelecom President Speaks to First Amendment Think Tank The Media Institute

By John Eggerton

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Speaking to Washington, D.C.-based First Amendment think tank The Media Institute for the first time, Walter McCormick, president of USTelecom, essentially made an argument against network-neutrality regulation but without invoking the phrase.

And once he did, he likened it to the Federal Communications Commission's Fairness Doctrine for broadcasters, which the commission jettisoned in the 1980s.

McCormick said speech was the "killer app" of the broadband revolution, but it would be threatened by overregulation.

Net neutrality was clearly the elephant in the speech. McCormick praised The Media Institute for "taking a stand for an arms-length role for the government when it comes to this extraordinary new platform of broadband."

He talked about how broadband is "enhancing individual freedom of expression and diversity of views and how no one can control the message." Of course, the complaint against phone and cable networks by network-neutrality-legislation proponents is that "network management" has translated into controlling that message.

He also talked of the importance of private investment in broadband, which networks argued would be chilled by regulations.

But while he did not mention network neutrality by name, McCormick did say that it was no time to be regulating the phone companies' broadband business, making a pitch for "the freedom to engage in sophisticated network management to ensure that the Internet works well for all of us."

Asked why the FCC shouldn't provide a better definition of "reasonable network management," McCormick likened it to a First Amendment fight broadcasters waged against the Fairness Doctrine, which required broadcasters to air both sides of controversial issues of public importance.

He said that the government's "grand experiment" with the doctrine was a kind of management regulation of broadcasting, pointing out that it was never applied to newspapers because anyone was free to buy a newspaper.

"With the Internet, we don't need net neutrality imposed on network service providers because today, anybody who wants to invest and offer Internet access is free to do so," he added. "And they should be free to partner with those who can take broadband and develop applications and services that will be of enormous benefit."