



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CONNECTICUT.

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CGA Energy and Technology Committee Public Hearing – February 26, 2020

SUPPORT FOR

Raised SB 5 – AAC INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS AND NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES

**Submitted by Pua Ford, Media Issues Specialist
League of Women Voters of Connecticut**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity today to offer support for Committee Bill SB 5. Our support is based on the position adopted by our membership in May 2008 and reaffirmed at the 2019 League Convention.

A Neutral Internet: "Net Neutrality"

The LWVCT believes that a free and open Internet is increasingly important to the protection of individual liberties – freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association – guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and by the Connecticut Constitution. The League also believes that net neutrality protections are essential for political discourse, dissemination of news, and democratic participation. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Connecticut supports the 2006 LWVUS resolution to protect the open, neutral, nondiscriminatory nature of the Internet. To further this position, the LWVCT supports efforts by the State of Connecticut to protect the open, neutral, nondiscriminatory nature of the Internet.

We looked over the written material from this committee's 2018 informational forum on Net Neutrality. The Connecticut Network recording is still available on ct-n.com. Our support remains the same as during 2018 and 2019 for all the reasons previously stated. To save paper, you hope you can check [this link](#) to review our 2018 testimony, still available on the General Assembly's website.

Although action by the U.S. Congress on Net Neutrality is the best way to clarify how we deal with this, it is clear that such action is unlikely to happen soon. Since the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals decision on *Mozilla v. FCC*, Connecticut may now confidently follow Washington, Oregon, California, and other states in drawing up its own regulations.

Representatives of Internet Service Providers say that they already abide by principles of Net Neutrality, perhaps having learned from scandalous infractions of past decades. Having them document this affirmation with the Public Utility Regulatory Authority should be painless, but perhaps the \$5,000 annual fee is a problem for them (Section 1(b) of the bill, lines 40-45). It seems like a stick where a carrot would be more appropriate.

An alternative might be something like the bonds used by land-use boards. The board grants approval for a building application with certain conditions and asks the builder to pay a bond. If the applicant abides by the conditions (for example, harms no wetlands or does not build too close to the road), the bond is released, money is returned. That would be both stick and carrot, and perhaps it bit less unfriendly.

But if the \$5,000 annual fee is intended to cover PURA personnel costs for handling reports from ISPs and receiving and recording complaints, only PURA can tell you if the fee is appropriate or if anything could be returned to an ISP after a period of demonstrated compliance with Net Neutrality.

On behalf of the League, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, and welcome any questions that committee members may have.