

OPINION

Iowa is political ground zero

EDITORIAL With the Iowa caucuses only 11 months away, and the next presidential election only nine months after that, folks in Iowa might feel like they have some time to relax before the national media attention and omnipresent television ads return, but that's not the case.

Even if a political candidate isn't in your neighborhood or community right now, a political advocacy group is most assuredly already there, laying the groundwork and making Iowa ground zero.

Political advocacy groups are attempting to develop infrastructure and attention in Iowa to help further their political priorities. This is largely due to the attention the Iowa Caucuses get from the national and international media, as well as the retail politics our state is known to have.

According to a recent news article, one relative newcomer, No Labels, is serious about building networks of people who support problem solving and want to work toward a bipartisan agenda that a new president could enact in 2017, organizers say. And Iowa is one of its important states. State Sen. Jeff Danielson (D-Waterloo) is spearheading No Label's efforts in Iowa.

To jump-start the group's presence in Iowa, Mr. Danielson hopes to find one Republican and one Democrat to be out front — preferably an experienced state official with some campaign war wounds and trend-setting gravitas, according to a news article. So far, no one has stepped forward.

Another active organization is Americans for Prosperity, the Koch brothers-backed advocacy group that espouses low taxes, small government and minimal involvement by government in the economy. The organization has five field offices and 27 employees in the state, according to a recent report from the Des Moines Register.

One of the oldest and more well-known political advocacy organizations is the Concord Coalition, which is a nationwide, grassroots organization advocating for generationally responsible fiscal policy, and dedicated to educating the public about the causes and consequences of federal budget deficits. The Concord Coalition was founded in 1992 by the late former Sen. Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.), late former Sen. Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), and former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Peter Peterson.

The Concord Coalition organization has been quite savvy by tapping into existing events and activities in the state like the Corridor Business Journal's annual Health Care Summit on Feb. 13 by providing two national health policy experts. They were Douglas Holtz-Eakin, who served as chief economist for President George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, and Ken Thorpe, who was deputy assistant secretary for health policy in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during President Bill Clinton's administration.

Iowans have a special responsibility as citizens of the first caucus state to pay attention to what these groups are doing, and help vet future presidential candidates. It seems that that responsibility will only continue to grow as more of these political organizations embrace Iowa and its first-in-the-nation role.



PARESH NATH, THE KHALEEJ TIMES, UAE

Net neutrality: It's complicated

The newspapers and airwaves are currently filled with talk of "network neutrality." Technically, it is about traffic — email, web queries, voice and video — and its possible prioritization on the Internet. Should Internet service providers and governments treat all data equally, or can they give preference to some content, sites, applications, users or devices based on defined criteria?

gines, social networks, email service providers and Internet businesses).

Mediated by the U.S. government, the outcome of this battle has profound implications for all of us who consume content and use the Internet for work, recreation and social interaction. It will determine how much we pay for bandwidth, what services are available and how good they are.

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If you believe the pundits, network neutrality is about truth, justice and the unfettered right to watch YouTube videos. In reality, the network neutrality debate is a power and economic struggle between Internet service providers (i.e., mostly cable systems, telephone companies and wireless carriers) and those who provide content and services (e.g., movie and video services, search en-

To understand the net neutrality power struggle, it's instructive to consider an analogy with roads and traffic. Imagine a world where almost all roads were built, owned and operated by companies, rather than state and local governments. To recoup their construction costs and a profit, the companies charge tolls on all vehicles using the roads. To further complicate things, many of

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those road companies also operate their own fleets of cars and trucks, competing with their customers to deliver goods and services.

The question is whether the road owners and operators can give priority to certain vehicles — their own or those of others — based on how much the owners are willing to pay, the size of the fleets and where the traffic goes. Superficially, the answer would seem to be yes, they should, until you realize that the goods and services on which individuals and businesses all depend are being delivered by those vehicles. This conundrum is the balance of private enterprise and the public good.

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One need look no further than the history of water companies, electric utilities, radio and television and telephone companies to see the creative tension between regulation for the common good and stimulating free enterprise and supporting innovation. Many of us remember when the old AT&T (Ma Bell) was a regulated monopoly, with telephone rates and services subject to state and federal approval. The 1982 breakup of AT&T into a long-distance company and a set of regional Bell operating companies (RBOCs) led to an explosion of wired and wireless services, competition from Sprint and MCI, and much lower long-distance rates.

However, those old telephone regulations also supported the public good, ensuring that inexpensive telephone service was available everywhere, whether one lived in an isolated, rural area or a large city. How? Because the regulations included cross-subsidies to support rural service. For all the excitement about high-speed Internet access, it is not universally available because the revenue in rural areas does not cover the costs of service.

This brings us back to the network neutrality debate. The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is proposing to treat the Internet, both wired and wireless, as a telecommunications service, using the same legal authority it uses to regulate other telecommunications services: radio, television and telephony. Under the proposed rules, Internet broadband would be treated as a "common carrier," meaning the network must be open for all without discrimination. In addition, the FCC has proposed to refrain (forbear) from enforcing those regulatory provisions not relevant to modern broadband services, and would not regulate rates or mandate service.

The political and economic battle is raging over how much regulation would be applied and how those regulations would affect the players. Some argue that any regulation will stifle innovation and private sector investment, and bring us a step closer to big brother rate regulation and tariff, in the spirit of Ma Bell oversight.

I think that is highly unlikely, as the Internet is filled with competing services and companies. Rather, the network neutrality debate is about balancing innovation, private enterprise and the public good, while ensuring fairness and equal access. Simply put, it is a debate about appropriate checks and balances for a critical service. It should not be a political issue.

Internet access was once a luxury, but no longer. In a 21st century knowledge economy, high-speed Internet services are the roads, waterways and rail lines of trade and commerce. They are the successors to telegraphy and telephony, coupling individuals and families across time and space. They are society's essential services, especially in a state like Iowa, where we are deeply dependent on communication for our future.

We need policies that enable universal access, while also ensuring Internet service providers have the flexibility and freedom to innovate, and the economic returns to make that attractive. We also need mechanisms and technologies that support both top-down and bottom-up network deployment, allowing new market entrants and existing companies to expand coverage.

Remember, network neutrality is not just about streaming high-definition movies to your television or mobile device. It's also about broadband access for education, electronic consultation with a medical specialist during a winter storm, small businesses marketing products globally and precision agriculture that lets Iowa farmers maximize crop yields. In short, network neutrality is complicated, but it matters to all of us. ●

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- 1 Doctor of Medical Science (abbr.)
- 5 Cancelled (abbr.)
- 9 Sounds of delight
- 12 Korean apricot
- 13 Large ocean fish
- 14 Ascertain
- 15 Royal Australian Air Force (abbr.)
- 16 Fail
- 17 Lamb's mother
- 18 Having (suf.)
- 20 People from Asia
- 22 Small S.A. rabbit
- 25 Limited (abbr.)
- 26 Across
- 28 Paraguay tea
- 32 No sugar added (abbr.)
- 33 Et cetera (abbr.)
- 35 Office of Strategic Services (abbr.)
- 36 Afloat (2 words)

DOWN

- 39 Elephant seats
- 42 Old English money
- 44 Unmarried
- 45 Long searches
- 48 Computers
- 49 United States Reserves (abbr.)
- 50 Despise
- 52 Quantity of hair
- 56 Friend (Fr.)
- 57 One unit
- 58 Noun-forming (suf.)
- 59 Doctor of Christian Science (abbr.)
- 60 Violate
- 61 Install

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

B	A	N	C	M	A	A	S	I	N	O
E	C	H	O	I	S	B	N	Z	A	N
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A437

- 5 Conflict
- 6 Army Post Office (abbr.)
- 7 Nose (pert. to)
- 8 Conceited
- 9 Aboard ship
- 10 Chopped
- 11 Beholds
- 19 Make use of (in prescrip.)
- 21 Cyprinoid fish
- 22 Kenyan river
- 23 Assistant (abbr.)
- 24 Parent teacher groups
- 27 Ethiopia (abbr.)
- 29 Boulevard
- 30 Behavioral Science & Health Education (abbr.)
- 31 Association (abbr.)
- 34 Contest
- 37 Parrot
- 38 Guinevere's husband
- 40 Women's Army Corps (abbr.)
- 41 Bowls
- 43 Hindu position
- 45 Printer's spacing block
- 46 U.S. Navy component (abbr.)
- 47 Sister of Ares
- 51 Advice
- 53 One
- 54 Nat'l Security Agency (abbr.)
- 55 Ketone (pref.)



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