

Statement of Gigi B. Sohn
President and co-founder, Public Knowledge
No Choke Points Alliance
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Good morning. Most of the time when we speak about the price of high-speed Internet connections, we speak about what the consumer pays, which is a lot, or what choices the consumer has, which are few.

Today, I'd like to start things off by focusing on another part of the Internet food chain – the high-capacity data lines that connect the consumer's Internet service to the rest of the network. These lines, called "special access" in the jargon of the Federal Communications Commission, are the hidden "middle mile" that provide the vital link that makes Internet and other services a reality. These lines are also essential, as you will hear later, to cell phone providers to get the calls of their customers distributed around the world, and for businesses to connect their facilities.

For years, these special access lines have come to represent huge choke points in the telephone network. For as little competition as there is in the consumer world, there is virtually none in the special access world. Every study of this market has made the same finding: that the rates of return earned by telephone companies are exorbitant and that the economy suffers as a result as costs go up for consumers, cell phone companies that compete with AT&T, Verizon and Qwest and for business customers.

Even the FCC under Chairman Kevin Martin declined to deregulate the special access markets because there is so little competition. Yet, with the loose regulation we now have, there is still considerable room for substantial economic harm.

The telephone companies will try to paint this as yet another industry spat. It is not. It is much more than that. This is about consumer welfare, and about a handful of phone companies that hold choke points over other industries, some of them competitors, run amok.

Today you will hear from wireless users, business users and others of us in the public interest community who formed this coalition to urge the FCC to take the actions needed to loosen the stranglehold the phone companies have on the broadband market. We have asked Acting FCC Chairman Copps, and are asking FCC Chairman-designate Genachowski to put this item on their agendas. Today we are taking special access out of the shadows and bringing it into the light where it belongs. Thank you.