

My Letter on the Open Internet to Chairman Wheeler

By Holly Lisle

We have a chance right now to speak up on either sanctioning or protesting the creation of second-class citizens on the internet. I chose to protest.

Thursday, September 11, 2014

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

As someone who built my first personal website back in 1996, and who built my first internet business about ten years later, I'd like to suggest that the Internet is the most valuable source of information and understanding on the planet.

My writing students take my classes from all parts of the world, and from every continent except Antarctica—and I'd happily give a free writing course to the first guy stationed down there who asks, just to get the bragging rights.

I'm a small business owner. I have about ten to fifteen thousand students, with between five hundred and a thousand active in my classes at any given time. I don't add massively to the GNP or the GDP, and am unlikely to.

But I do add something, and it's more than I was able to add when I was an RN.

Like tens of thousands of other Americans, I've found a way to offer my skills—in my case, in writing fiction and teaching others how to do the same—to a broader audience than I could have ever hoped to reach at any time in human history.

And, as with all other small businessmen and businesswomen working online right now, I am able to do this simply because no one has chosen to encourage roadblocks that would slow me down.

Or my students.

And this letter speaks to the situation of many of my students. Writers are overall not a rich bunch, and statistically, income for writers skirts the poverty line pretty tightly when it stays above it at all.

I ask that you work to maintain the current Internet structure of steady overall improvements that permits these folks to stay online and interact with other writers—to learn the skills of a paying trade, and by doing so, to learn how to better their own economic status. And to do this without the barriers imposed by being designated second-class citizens, relegated to the cheap seats in the Internet's magnificent theater of the mind.

Once a "slow lane" is created with a baseline that—once

set—will be ignored because it can be, service providers will have little incentive to improve that base standard and upgrade the overall network. The folks in the cheap seats will fall farther behind as “fast lanes” get the lion’s share of improvements.

And this will bury a lot of my folks, who are just squeaking by as it is, or who are on Internet that is barely acceptable as their current baseline because they live in areas of the country poorly served by broadband.

My students are of all races, all religions, all economic strata. A lot of them are single moms and single dads, retirees, kids in college, professional writers with barely-there careers trying to improve their work to reach a broader audience...and all of them are folks who hope to make their lives better than they are now.

I’m doing everything in my power to help them succeed.

I ask that you do the same.

Sincerely,

Holly Lisle

Novelist, writing course creator.

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You can submit your own comment to the FCC, and I ask that, if this matters to you, you do. ([link opens in new tab](#))

Your comments are welcome below.

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