One on the many things we can be thankful for this Thanksgiving is an Internet that has operated under rules and guidelines that ensure open nondiscriminatory access to the vast array of sites, services and products. This open Internet has thrived because of net neutrality principles that have worked to ensure that individuals and businesses had open access to discover any site or visit favorites without being steered to visit ISP preferred sites, preferred because of a parochial business deal.

The internet has evolved from dial up to gigabit broadband in recent years -- and it is a blessing for all, from businesses connecting to customers, and free speech advocates to all of us just keeping in touch with relatives during and between holidays. These net neutrality principles have kept access to the Internet open and not merely functioning like cable TV or health care networks do.

But our feast of freedom and open access to the Internet may change next month. Soon big Internet service providers like AT&T and Comcast want to engage in deals with big companies, favor their own in house content or route traffic faster for Hulu instead of Netflix, for example. Such discriminating deals are now prohibited by net neutrality regulations enforceable by the FCC - the agency Congress designated to protect consumers access to services like the telephone and local radio.

Over the past two decades, the FCC has struggled with the best way to protect the Open Internet. And last year a Federal appeals court ruling settled the issue and upheld the FCC’s Open Internet Order that would continue to prevent discrimination against similar types of online content.

Public interest groups and businesses that rely on the internet to reach customers were thankful. For small businesses, this meant they did not have to worry about their ISP trying to extract money out of them arbitrarily. Churches, nonprofits, and minority groups that don’t have the same resources as big companies rejoiced, as they could continue to reach their audiences.

But in the days leading up to this year’s Thanksgiving holiday, the new FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, is expected to eliminate or eviscerate strong, judicially approved and effective net neutrality rules. Pai plans to change the internet access we have enjoyed for over two decades, and he has the votes from enough of his fellow Commissioners to do it.

Is the Thanksgiving holiday being used as a cover for such an anti-consumer move? Does he hope that people are not paying attention?  His actions will provide a feast for the big ISPs, and leave the rest of us, including thousands of businesses and millions of consumers, with cold leftover scraps.

Maybe he’s following the latest tax cut spirit that sometimes the needs of the few outweigh the needs of the many. Maybe there is some reason he feels compelled to deliver this gift which tops AT&T’s and Comcast’s wish list before Christmas, but we don’t see the need and certainly not the urgency.

My nonprofit tech trade association spent a decade advocating for the current Open Internet rules. These rules should not be negated by a decision that enriches narrow parochial interests at the expense of the public interest the FCC is sworn to serve.

No matter how Pai dresses it up, this is yet another loss for free speech online and for the next tech startup that will face greater odds of being discovered and appreciated by customers.

As people focus on their families this holiday season, very few realize what is at stake. The current openness is taken for granted because the internet has historically been neutral and ISPs have had to treat all traffic equally. So it’s hard to picture a different model for the internet where ISPs can charge more to access different websites and content. Without open internet rules, the internet would function more like a cable company where your ISP can force extra charges for sites or package deals for certain types of access.

So for tech companies and Internet users it’s worth being grateful this holiday season for how the open internet has provided a platform for economic growth. We would urge Congress to remind the FCC to do its job and protect consumers, and urge all of us to remind Congress of how important this is.

If this were a month later, we might have themed our critique around the “Grinch that stole Christmas” - also an apt and justifiable metaphor.