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## **County of Santa Clara to Challenge Trump Administration's Repeal of Net Neutrality Protections**

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF.** – Today, the County of Santa Clara announced its intent to file a lawsuit challenging the Trump Administration's unlawful repeal of net neutrality protections. Brought by the Office of the County Counsel with assistance from Stanford Law School's Juelsgaard Intellectual Property and Innovation Clinic, the lawsuit will seek to preserve fair and open access to the internet.

"This County is a center of innovation. We are at the heart of Silicon Valley," said Supervisor Joe Simitian. "The FCC's action harms start-ups, small companies, and businesses generally, who rely on a level playing field to compete. It hampers development and investment in cutting-edge Internet technologies that the County relies upon."

"The digital town square can no longer foster democracy if it is subject to blocking, throttling or paid priority, priority limited to those with resources. And in a day and age when public services are increasingly accessed online, the FCC action threatens the ability of the public to access services they need and pay taxes for," Simitian said.

In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a set of rules commonly known as the Net Neutrality Rules. The Net Neutrality Rules prohibit broadband internet service providers from discriminating against lawful internet traffic—generally by blocking it or slowing it down—for financial or other reasons. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, who was elevated to that position by President Trump, led the FCC in a vote today to reverse the Net Neutrality Rules that protect consumers from discrimination by internet service providers.

The County has made substantial investments to develop and implement systems that provide critical health, welfare, and safety services over the internet, including emergency response services. For example, County Fire relies on internet-based systems to provide essential fire and emergency services. The FCC's decision will jeopardize County residents' ability to access these vital services, thereby threatening public health and safety, and will undermine the County's investments.

“The County provides critical safety-net services to our neediest residents. The repeal of the Net Neutrality Rules would allow profit-seekers to burden the County, impact our residents and make it more difficult to provide critical information and services to those in need,” said County Board of Supervisors President Dave Cortese. “Silicon Valley has led the way in developing the Internet as we know it today, and we will play a leadership role in protecting it.”

“The FCC’s repeal of the Net Neutrality Rules is arbitrary and unjustified, and it is therefore unlawful” said Santa Clara County Counsel James R. Williams. “We will fight to protect the open internet, preserve the County’s ability to provide crucial health and safety services to our residents, and ensure that innovation continues to thrive in Silicon Valley.”

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### **About the Santa Clara County Counsel’s Office**

The County Counsel serves as legal counsel to the County, its Board of Supervisors and elected officials, every County department and agency, and the County’s boards and commissions. With a staff of 170 employees, including 85 attorneys, the Office of the County Counsel is also responsible for all civil litigation involving the County and its officers. Through its Social Justice and Impact Litigation Section, the Office litigates high-impact cases, drafts innovative local ordinances, and develops policies and programs to advance social and economic justice.

### **About the County of Santa Clara, California**

The County of Santa Clara government serves a diverse, multi-cultural population of 1.9 million residents. With a \$6.5 billion annual budget, dozens of offices/departments, and over 18,000 employees, the County provides essential services to its residents, including public health protection, environmental stewardship, medical services through Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, child and adult protection services, homelessness prevention and solutions, roads, park services, libraries, emergency response to disasters, protection of minority communities and those under threat, access to a fair criminal justice system, and many others, particularly for those in the greatest need. The County is the most populous in Northern California.