

Opponents of rules that force companies to provide equal access to Internet bandwidth got a bipartisan boost to their argument late on Monday.

Democratic Reps. Collin Peterson of Minnesota and Dan Boren of Oklahoma joined Chairman Fred Upton, R-Mich., Communications and Technology Subcommittee Chairman Greg Walden, R-Oregon, and Subcommittee Vice Chair

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ee Terry,
R-Neb**

., in a "Dear Colleague" letter urging support of a resolution overturning the controversial Federal Communications Commission network neutrality rules.

"The Internet is an open and thriving marketplace and job creator, thanks in no small part to the historical hands-off approach to regulation from the federal government," the congressmen wrote. "However... the Federal Communications Commission intends to change all that with recently passed rules to impose unprecedented job-destroying rules on the Internet. The Internet has been open and free - and should stay that way."

The full House Energy and Commerce Committee is now considering the GOP-led effort to overturn the regulations.

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., said the FCC resolution is expected to come up for a floor vote before the Easter recess. The net neutrality rules "have the potential for significantly harmful effects for job growth and that is why we believe it should be the business of Congress to remove those impediments," he said Monday.

During Monday's markup, Walden dismissed assertions that major Internet companies are satisfied with the regulations. "While some of my Democratic colleagues acclaim larger providers like the order, they are actually damning the rules with faint praise," he said.

On the Senate side, Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) said he will introduce a bill that would make net neutrality violations a crime to be prosecuted under antitrust law.

"I'm introducing a new bill that would call violations of net neutrality out for what they are-anti-competitive actions by powerful media conglomerates that represent violations of our anti-trust laws. We don't allow big corporations to use their size to bully their competition, and my bill would make it clear that this applies to telecoms that use their power to control the Internet," Franken said in a speech to the South By Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Festival in

Austin, Texas.

