Epic, Spotify, and others take on Apple with “Coalition for App Fairness”

Enlarge / Major developers are sick and tired of Apple’s rules, and they’ve made a website about it.

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Exactly how much power app store owners should have over developers has been a contentious issue lately, and now several high-profile app developers are banding together to form the “Coalition for App Fairness.” The group describes itself as “an independent nonprofit organization founded by industry-leading companies to advocate for freedom of choice and fair competition across the app ecosystem.”

Just about every app developer that has publicly clashed with Apple in the past few months is among the 13 founding members of the coalition. They include Epic Games, which had the smash-hit game *Fortnite* banned from the App Store for implementing its own in-app payment system; Spotify, which filed an antitrust complaint against Apple in the EU over Apple’s 30-percent cut of sales; ProtonMail, whose CEO said Apple was holding developers “hostage” with the 30-percent fee; and also Basecamp, which called Apple’s policies “exploitative” after updates to its Hey email app were blocked for using the same non-Apple billing technique that Netflix uses.

The coalition has a website, AppFairness.org, that lays out its demands. The website exclusively targets Apple’s App Store with three main issues: anti-competitive policies that favor Apple’s apps over competitors’, the 15-30-percent fee in the app store being too high, and Apple’s ban on competing app stores and payment methods.

The founding members of the group.

The group compares Apple’s 30-percent fee to the 5-percent cut charged from “other payment providers” like credit card companies, and it also says Apple charges “600% more.” An app store is more than just a payment provider since it handles hosting, SDK and app store development, app screening, and support. But it’s hard to look at Apple’s $15 billion in App Store revenue and claim the company can’t afford to charge

less.

The group is based in Washington, DC, suggesting there will be some lobbying in its future. The site hints at this, saying, “As enforcers, regulators, and legislators around the world seek to address these important issues, we, the Coalition for App Fairness, urge them to recognize that every app developer, regardless of size or the nature of the developer’s business, is entitled to fair treatment.”

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