Net neutrality bill 38 votes short in Congress, and time has almost run out

Enlarge / The dome of the United State Capitol Building in Washington, DC.
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Legislation to restore net neutrality rules now has 180 supporters in the US House of Representatives, but that's 38 votes short of the amount needed before the end of the month.

The Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution, already approved by the Senate, would reverse the Federal Communications Commission's repeal of net neutrality rules. But 218 signatures from US representatives (a majority) are needed to force a full vote in the House before Congress adjourns at the end of the year.

Net neutrality advocates previously said they needed 218 signatures by December 10 to force a vote. But an extension of Congress' session provided a little more time.

"[Now that the Congressional session has officially been extended, members of Congress could be in town as late as December 21st," net neutrality advocacy group Fight for the Future wrote yesterday. "This means we have until the end of the year to get as many lawmakers as possible signed on to

restore net neutrality."

Three new supporters, but chances are slim

A discharge petition that would force a vote on the CRA resolution gained three new supporters in the past two weeks, with Reps. Joseph Morelle (D-New York), Susan Wild (D-Penn.), and Frederica Wilson (D-Florida) signing on.

The petition's chances are slim, because even getting all Democrats on board wouldn't be enough to force a vote. Republicans have a 236-197 House majority, but only one House Republican has signed the petition.

Forcing a vote in the House might be complicated, but not impossible, if 218 signatures are secured right before the end of December.

"If 218 members agree that the CRA needs to be addressed this year, there are procedural mechanisms that can force a vote in the House," a Democratic aide told Ars.

Even if it passes the House this year, President Trump could veto the CRA resolution.

Democrats will control the House in January, but they would have to start over with a new net neutrality bill and would face a tougher path in the Senate, where Republicans increased their majority from 51-49 to 53-47 in the recent election.

"There's a good chance we won't make it to 218 signatures on the CRA discharge petition in time—but every extra vote we pick up between now and the end of the year will help put us in the best possible position," Fight for the Future wrote. "No matter what happens with the CRA, we will continue to fight for a free and open Internet in the courts, state legislatures, and the incoming Congress in 2019."

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