

AUTHOR OF USA FREEDOM ACT SAYS “NOBODY’S GOT TO USE THE INTERNET”

As a number of outlets have reported, at a town hall last week, Wisconsin’s Jim Sensenbrenner told a constituent, asking about her congressman’s vote to overturn Obama’s broadband privacy rules, said, “Nobody’s got to use the Internet.”

“Facebook is not comparable to an ISP. I do not have to go on Facebook,” the town hall meeting attendee said. But when it comes to Internet service providers, the person said, “I have one choice. I don’t have to go on Google. My ISP provider is different than those providers.”

That’s when Sensenbrenner said, “Nobody’s got to use the Internet.” He praised ISPs for “invest[ing] an awful lot of money in having almost universal service now.” He then said, “I don’t think it’s my job to tell you that you cannot get advertising for your information being sold. My job, I think, is to tell you that you have the opportunity to do it, and then you take it upon yourself to make the choice.”

It’s of course an absurd comment. It is difficult to get a job in this day and age without Internet access; it’s hard to find a place to live. It’s not a matter of convenience, at this point it is necessary to be on the Internet to be a fully integrated citizen.

But note why Sensenbrenner said this: he pitched it in terms of the beneficent ISP providers who have kindly provided us all gateways to the Internet.

What no report I've seen has noted is that Sensenbrenner also happens to be the author of the USA Freedom Act as passed. In spite of his key role in defeating prior efforts to shut down the PATRIOT Act dragnets, Sensenbrenner managed to pose as a privacy advocate (making horseshit claims about knowing about the dragnet) so as to push through a bill that took the heat off telecoms, all while making more innocent Americans' data available to NSA's analytical maw.

Here, he reveals his true colors, a completely unrealistic view of the importance of the Internet on actual human beings.