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In a message to political supporters, [Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson](#) (Democratic-Farmer-Labor) said Tuesday that she would file a lawsuit with other state attorneys general asking the court to overturn a federal decision that repeals a rule designed to keep access to the internet free and open.

The move would challenge the Federal Communications Commission's [recent overturning](#) of "net neutrality," a 2015 regulation mandating that internet companies treat all traffic equally and not create slow or fast lanes for companies based on extra fees. "Without net neutrality, broadband companies are free to block content they don't want you to see, to slow it down and make it harder to access, or to prioritize content based on who pays them money," Swanson wrote to supporters in an e-mail. "Mega corporations can dominate the content people see online by paying money to obtain faster speeds. This will make it more difficult and more expensive for consumers to access the content they want."

Over the summer, the FCC's proposal drew a record 20 million-plus public comments. The commission voted 3-2 this month to undo the Obama-era rule, with Chairman Ajit Pai saying the move would benefit consumers and give broadband providers more incentive to build networks. The FCC's ruling was always expected to draw legal challenges, and attorneys general of New York, Oregon, Washington, Illinois and Iowa have already expressed an intent to sue. Litigants have to wait 10 days until after the decision is posted in the federal register, which has yet to happen.

Swanson, a DFLer, is considered a likely contender for next year's gubernatorial race. She concluded her e-mail with praise for Sen. Al Franken, a fellow DFLer who is leaving office next week and [has made](#) the preservation of net neutrality one of his biggest causes. – *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

Jeff Kowunna used his drone to record this year's celebration of another successful bowhead whaling harvest for one of the oldest Alaska Native settlements.

The video from the three-day event in remote Point Hope, at the edge of the Arctic Ocean, showed whaling captains sharing the flippers with residents, traditional drumming and dancing, and the ever-popular blanket toss, where villagers use seal skins to heave each other into the air. But Kowunna's

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plan to share this unique slice of Inupiat culture online was thwarted by the area's notoriously slow satellite connection.

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This month, the 34-year-old whale hunter is ready to try again. His community of 700 and several other isolated Alaska towns are getting a commodity much of the U.S. has long taken for granted: high-speed Internet. "I've been counting the days," Kowunna said of the broadband he hopes will help him connect more immediately with the world with posts from gatherings like the June whaling feast, or Qagruk, while updating folks

who have moved away. "I think it's going to be a lot smoother sailing as far as streaming to the web."

The new service is part of a planned international fiber-optic system from Anchorage-based wholesaler Quintillion that eventually will connect London and Tokyo via the Arctic. It's the result of several factors, representatives say, including technical advances, private investors willing to bet on the system, and a warming Arctic environment that opened up a limited construction season, allowing crews to bury hundreds of miles of subsea cable off Alaska's upper coast. "Clearly, 20 years ago, even 10 years ago, the situation with the ice in that part of the world would have made the progress much more difficult to accomplish," Quintillion spokesman Tim Woolston said.

The effect on far-northern Alaska — where many rely on a subsistence lifestyle for food — could be dramatic: No more classroom computers crashing during lessons, software taking an entire day to download, movies buffering for hours, and sophisticated medical equipment sitting partially unused. "A project like this is critical," said Mike Romano with NTCA-the Rural Broadband Association, which represents 850 small telecom and broadband service providers in the U.S. and Canada. Connecting rural communities remains a significant broadband challenge because of the higher cost of delivering service far from metropolitan hubs.

Alaska's 1,400-mile portion of the international project includes a land trunk line between Fairbanks and the Prudhoe Bay oil fields that went live in the spring. Quintillion has not released plans or a timetable for the larger project and will not say how much has been spent so far in the private venture. New York private equity firm Cooper Investment Partners is anchoring the financing. Ship crews finished installing the last Alaska segment of subsea cable in October, and the network became available to telecom providers Dec. 1.

The improved service won't be cheap, said Jens Laipenieks, CEO of Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, which serves three of the affected communities. Laipenieks expects the cost to drop when the final two phases are built and more wholesale tenants join the system. Still, commodities always cost more in the Arctic, where everything has to be flown or shipped up. Fiber-optic is no exception, but the expense has not dampened enthusiasm, according to utility officials. "That's just the reality of being in an ultra-rural market," Laipenieks said. "But the technology will never be the limiting factor again."

Not everyone is sold on the new link. In Point Hope, Inupiat artist and traditional skin-boat maker Henry Koonook worries people will be more distracted by the online world than they already are. Koonook himself has nothing to do with computers, even to connect with prospective buyers. "That little box — what they call a laptop and iPhones — is ruining our people," he said. "It's helping them

with their education and stuff like that, but they're drifting away from the culture and traditions, and it's going fast."

Others have big plans for tapping into the faster and more reliable service. The Arctic Slope Regional Corp., an Alaska Native corporation and minority investor in the Quintillion project, is developing an online store featuring artwork by its shareholders, a tourism platform for its eight villages and a repository of stories and videos featuring Inupiat elders. "It's just limitless what we can do now," said Cheryl Stine, its chief administrative officer. — **Associated Press**

Daniela Perdomo is concerned about the power of U.S. telecom giants that stand to gain from the repeal of "net neutrality" rules. Her company offers a way around them: A \$90 antenna that lets users send messages without cellular service or Wi-Fi.

Ms. Perdomo is among the entrepreneurs whose vision for an alternative route to internet access is finding takers in Silicon Valley, where tech types were rattled by a recent government decision to overturn rules that required big internet providers to treat all traffic equally. "Society requires connectivity to function and to advance but we are leaving telecommunications in the hands of a few large corporations," Ms. Perdomo said. "The lack of a choice is a problem."

The Federal Communications Commission **voted earlier this month to dismantle so-called net-neutrality rules**. These Obama-era regulations were designed to prevent broadband providers from using their power to limit web access. Without those protections, telecom giants may be free to charge more for access to high-speed internet, making survival harder for smaller startups, which can't afford to pay extra fees.

Some investors and entrepreneurs are seeking to fight back with technology. They are building startups that try to take existing technologies—including virtual private networks and wireless "mesh" networks—and turn them into products that could one day help millions of people reduce the need to rely on broadband providers for web access. Many such efforts were launched before 2015, when the FCC set limits on broadband providers. They are finding new significance in a world without those limits. The projects are early in development and unproven. And it isn't clear whether fewer regulations will affect competition and prices in the internet market. "Net neutrality has been killed at the behest of large carriers and network companies," said Om Malik, a partner at True Ventures and longtime Silicon Valley commentator. "Technology needs to figure out a way to increase competition."

One way might be through virtual private networks, or VPNs, a technology that businesses use to let remote workers connect to a secure online portal. Some VPNs help users shield their physical location and browsing patterns from internet service providers or governments, such as in Saudi Arabia, where users relied on the software to circumvent a statewide block of voice-calling service Skype last year. "We have been fighting this net neutrality battle in other countries over the last five years," said David Gorodyansky, chief executive of AnchorFree Inc., a Menlo Park, Calif., startup that provides VPN service Hotspot Shield. "We are going to do the same in the U.S."

Americans could use a service like Hotspot Shield to cloak their digital whereabouts from broadband providers. In theory, that would make it harder for telecom companies such as AT&T Inc. or Verizon Communications Inc. to slow down a site or completely block users from viewing it. One problem with VPNs is speed. The **online services most in danger of being blocked or throttled include video-streaming sites** and other high-bandwidth applications, which generally take longer to load when connecting through a VPN. AnchorFree has also drawn concerns about how it collects user data for the purpose of selling ads, according to a complaint filed with the Federal Trade Commission earlier this year.

Mr. Gorodyansky, whose company has raised more than \$62 million from investors including Goldman Sachs Group Inc., said his service is only "slightly slower" than normal web browsing. He said the company doesn't sell users' data to third parties. A mesh network may be another alternative to traditional internet access. Instead of accessing the internet through one provider, users of a mesh network pull bits of information from many different nodes—such as phones, laptops and antennas—around them, and often serve as a node themselves.

That is the idea behind Ms. Perdomo's company GoTenna Inc., which makes a strap-on antenna the size of a smartphone that can connect with sister devices several miles away using a radio signal. The devices sync to phones for a connection strong enough to send encrypted texts and GPS coordinates between devices. As more antennas are added to the network, the messages can be sent over distances surpassing 4 miles. Rather than Wi-Fi or cellular signal, GoTenna relies on publicly available radio frequencies.

Ms. Perdomo, a New Yorker who dreamed up GoTenna when Hurricane Sandy rendered the city's cellphone service unreliable in 2012, said her broader goal is to build a free, "bottom up" communication network accessible to all and more reliable than the "top down" networks controlled by a few large companies. Matt Filip, a 33-year-old field engineer in Downers Grove, Ill., bought a GoTenna earlier this year and has since used it to communicate with friends on hunting trips in remote locations. He said he likes the idea of commanding an alternative network to wireless carriers and plans to set it up at home to support other GoTenna users.

Another vision of mesh networks is taking shape in Porto, Portugal, where startup Veniam worked with city officials to install wireless sensors on moving vehicles, including buses and garbage trucks. The vehicles connect to Wi-Fi hot spots and to each other to create an internet network that reaches more people in more places. Veniam has deals with carriers including Vodafone Group PLC, which provides free wireless access to bus riders and other Porto residents. João Barros, Veniam's founder, says a system like this only works when wireless internet providers treat different users of data equally. "I imagine there may be a scenario where they will compete with each other to provide a more open policy," Mr. Barros said. Among his investors: mobile carriers Verizon and Orange SA. – *Wall Street Journal*

