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President Trump has named Ajit Pai, an advocate of deregulation and a critic of the government's net neutrality rules, as the next chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Pai's new position will give him control over the nation's most powerful telecom and cable regulator, with a 2-to-1 Republican majority that is widely expected to begin undoing some of former president Barack Obama's most significant tech policies.

The Indian American who grew up in Kansas had until now been a sitting Republican commissioner at the FCC — meaning he will not need to be confirmed by the Senate before serving as the agency's 34th chairman. Pai was a staunch critic of Democratic efforts aimed at breaking the dominance of some of America's biggest Internet providers, including AT&T, Comcast and Verizon. "I look forward to working with the new Administration, my colleagues at the Commission, members of Congress and the American public to bring the benefits of the digital age to all Americans," Pai said in a statement Monday.

Although consistent with Trump's largely deregulatory agenda, Pai's appointment breaks from the president's habit of appointing Washington outsiders to key roles. A former lawyer for Verizon and the Justice Department, Pai is well-versed in the minutiae of America's telecom law and frequently challenged his predecessor, former chairman Tom Wheeler, over the legality of Democratic proposals.

Although he operates comfortably in the weeds of telecom policy, Pai also peppers his speeches with references to sports, movies and other aspects of pop culture; like Trump, he is an avid Twitter user. The FCC has evolved to play a significant role in the affairs of businesses and consumers. In recent years, it has moved to block megamergers such as Comcast's bid to buy Time Warner Cable, drawn up new privacy regulations for Internet providers and pushed to help low-income Americans buy mobile data service.

Pai dissented from many of these decisions, and others as well. By contrast, he has pushed for streamlining the FCC's operations, accelerating the rollout of airwaves for mobile broadband and knocking down regulatory barriers that deter companies from investing in wired Internet. Consumer advocates on Monday urged Pai to safeguard consumer protections and prevent large corporations from unreasonably raising prices. “Chairman Pai has a record of promising to undo the agency’s landmark 2015 net neutrality rules as well as targeting consumer privacy while refusing to stand against consolidation among telecommunications and media giants,” the advocacy organization Public Knowledge said in a release.

Industry organizations leapt to Pai's defense Monday, in some cases welcoming the Republican's “common-sense philosophy.” “We stand ready to assist Chairman Pai and his colleagues in their effort to promote policies which ensure that America remains a global internet, communications and entertainment leader,” said NCTA — The Internet & Television Association, one of the country's top cable industry trade groups.

Policy analysts widely expect the FCC to roll back its net neutrality rules under Pai. The rules seek to prevent Internet providers from unfairly benefiting themselves at the expense of smaller online companies, particularly as more telecom behemoths such as Verizon and AT&T expand into digital content. Pai has long criticized the rules as an example of government overreach. In a December speech, he said it was time to fire up the “regulatory weed whacker.”

Pai's opposition to the rules could give Republicans in Congress the political room to craft a legislative deal with Democrats who view net neutrality protections as a key to preserving competition, policy analysts said. On Monday, Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said he is committed to drawing up a “long-term legislative solution to protecting the open Internet.” Although Pai does not need Senate confirmation to be named chairman, he will need to be renominated and confirmed by the Senate sometime this year to continue serving on the FCC, due to the timing of his existing term. – ***Wall Street Journal*****;** **also in *USA Today*, Pai no fan of net neutrality**

Yahoo Inc. said Monday its $4.8 billion deal with Verizon Communications Inc. will close a quarter later than expected, as both sides grapple with the fallout of two massive data breaches disclosed by the internet company. The hacks, announced in September and December, have cast a shadow over the future of Verizon’s agreement in July to buy Yahoo’s core internet business.

The acquisition was expected to close in the first three months of 2017, but on Mondy Yahoo said the deal’s closure would be pushed into the second quarter, citing “work required to meet closing conditions.” In a quarterly earnings report, Yahoo shared a chart showing a slight decline in page views, searches and email messages sent and read compared with metrics recorded on Dec. 14, when Yahoo announced a second breach affecting more than one billion user accounts. It didn’t provide underlying numbers in the chart.

A person familiar with Verizon’s thinking said the company was encouraged by Yahoo’s user-engagement numbers because they didn’t show a major decline. But, this person said, Verizon still needs more time to monitor the impact before making a final determination. In a statement, Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer said the opportunities with Verizon “look bright” and she pointed to “continued stability in our user engagement trends.” As it did the previous quarter, Yahoo skipped its conference call with analysts.

Investors remained optimistic the deal would go through. On Monday, Yahoo’s stock rose nearly 1% in after-hours trading to $42.70 after rising about 4% since the disclosure on Dec. 14 of the second hack. If the sale of Yahoo’s core internet business is completed, the remaining company would be called Altaba Inc., which would contain Yahoo’s stake in Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Yahoo Japan. Complicating matters for the deal is an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission into whether Yahoo should have disclosed the breaches sooner, as reported Sunday by The Wall Street Journal.

In September, Yahoo disclosed the 2014 theft of personal data of more than 500 million user accounts. The stolen data included names, email addresses, dates of birth, telephone numbers and encrypted passwords, Yahoo said. In October, Yahoo shared a chart that showed usage of its email product rose slightly after the first breach was reported.

Then in mid-December, Yahoo said it was hit with a different massive data breach in 2013 that compromised private information of more than one billion user accounts. The second hack amplified concerns among investors that the accord was at risk of falling apart. Before Yahoo disclosed that second hack, Verizon was close to an agreement with Yahoo on how to handling future hacking liabilities. The second hack put things on hold.

The disclosures of the hacks have overshadowed Yahoo's waning financial health. On Monday, Yahoo said its fourth-quarter revenue excluding commissions paid to partners for web traffic fell 4.2% to $960.1 million, marking the eight decline in the past nine periods for the key metric. Overall revenue rose 16% to $1.47 billion, but a change in the way Yahoo reports revenue contributed $302 million to that figure. Excluding the change, total revenue fell about 8%.

The same trend occurred when looking at revenue from "Mavens," a grouping Ms. Mayer introduced to track the growing areas of mobile, video, native an social ads. Revenue here rose 25% to $590 million, but excluding the accounting change, revenue would have fallen about 5%. Helped in part by the accounting change, Yahoo reported its second consecutive profitable quarter, with $164 million in the fourth period. A year earlier, the company had booked a huge loss because of a $4.46 billion goodwill impairment charge. – ***Wall Street Journal***

AT&T has received widespread criticism with regards to the service quality of its DirecTV Now video streaming service. Launched in November last year, investors will be keeping a close eye on the service's development as the company reports its fourth quarter earnings on January 25. According to reports from a number of media sources such as the Wall Street Journal and Verge, it appears that DirecTV Now has been plagued with technical issues like user experience problems with live content. Other problems being reported by AT&T's users include reduced video quality, frequent buffering, loading content and error messages.

However, investors shouldn't be too quick to write-off the service as it's important to remember that AT&T isn't the only over the top (OTT) service encountering these technical glitches. Dish Network's Sling which according to analysts' estimates currently has around 1 million subscribers, encountered similar issues during the college basketball's March Madness tournament back in 2015. A section of analysts have expressed their skepticism at the thought of OTT 'skinny' bundles that lack any powerful live event gaining mass acceptance. This is because live events such as the NFL and Super Bowl games get the most attention but usually require deals with major broadcast networks and station affiliate groups in order to secure the right to live broadcast them. – ***Seeking Alpha***