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Wall Street Journal
Years After 9/11 Chaos, U.S. to Build Wireless Network for Police, Firefighters (subscription may be required)

Harrisburg Patriot-News
Op-ed: For Trump's FCC, business interests are the public's interest

Chicago Tribune
Alderman urges Cubs not to create own cable network

Allentown Morning Call
Charlie Dent has the right idea about governing

Harrisburg Patriot-News
Have bribery, fraud and abuse of power become

If and when your local cable provider begins selling your personal browsing history, location data and Social Security number without your permission or knowledge in the near future, your three local Congressmen will be among those you can thank for the experience.

All three — Ryan Costello, R-6, Pat Meehan, R-7, and Brian Fitzpatrick, R-8, — **joined with other House Republicans Tuesday in a party-line 215-205 vote** to prevent rules the Obama administration adopted in October against vehement Republican opposition from going into effect at the end of the year. No Democrats voted for the rule's repeal and 15 Republicans also voted against the measure, according to **the tally taken by the House Clerk**.

The rules would have limited what internet providers like Comcast could have done with personal and computer user information as well as requiring "providers to strengthen safeguards for customer data against hackers and thieves," according to **a report in the *Washington Post***. The rules also would have prohibited "broadband offerings that are contingent on surrendering privacy rights" according to summary provided by the Congressional Research Service. The U.S. Senate has already passed the measure, with the help of a vote from Republican Sen. Pat Toomey, and President Donald Trump is expected to sign the measure.

If and when he does, "providers will be able to monitor their customers' behavior online and, without their permission, use their personal and financial information to sell highly targeted ads — making them rivals to Google and Facebook in the $83 billion online advertising market," according to the Post's report. "The providers could also sell their users' information directly to marketers, financial firms and other companies that mine personal data — all of whom could use the data without consumers' consent. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission, which initially drafted the protections, would be forbidden from issuing similar rules in the future," the Post reported.

"Supporters of Tuesday's repeal vote argued that the privacy regulations stifle innovation by forcing internet providers to abide by unreasonably strict guidelines" and ignore the more successful regulatory approach taken by the Federal Trade Commission, according to the Post and information from Costello. Because the rules were not yet in effect, not much will change in the short-term, according to the Associated Press.

"For now, phone and cable companies remain subject to federal law that imposes on broadband providers a 'duty to protect the confidentiality' of customer information and restricts them from using some customer data without 'approval,'" **according to the *Associated Press***. But that law "doesn't spell out how companies must get permission, how they must protect your data, or whether and how they have to tell you if it's been hacked," AP wrote.

Costello's office issued a strong statement regarding his vote. "Rep. Costello supports strong consumer protections for constituents' internet data. The pending rule not only deviates from long-

synonymous with 'Pennsylvania'?	established, successful precedent made by the very agency tasked with consumer protection — (the Federal Trade Commission) — but was so riddled with weaknesses the FTC issued a serious critique of the rule," according to a statement on the vote provided by Costello spokesperson Natalie Gillam. "Opponents of the bill have grossly mischaracterized it. Additionally, Rep. Costello supports legislative efforts to better align internet provider privacy rules with the (Federal Trade Commission), including a bill introduced yesterday," Gillam wrote. "For those wanting more information, please **read Rep. Costello's two page analysis on the vote**." In that analysis, Costello wrote: "at first glance, it would be reasonable to be concerned about Congress' disapproval of regulations issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that are titled 'Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunication Services,' which have also been dubbed the 'Broadband Privacy Rules.' Unfortunately, the name given to these regulations is aspirational, at best, and belies its true effect." "The FTC's framework provides the most sensible foundation in which to further (Internet Service Provider) privacy discussions," Costello wrote. "I would support efforts to align ISP privacy rules with the FTC framework so as to craft a harmonized regulatory structure that works to ensure consumers' best interests are protected." Costello also wrote that "the FTC is our expert agency when it comes to protecting individual privacy, and it has exercised a significant role in safeguarding consumers through enforcement actions and education initiatives" and pointed to the agency's recent action against Facebook for exposure of previously hidden profile content without consent. However, the Post noted, "the FTC does not have the authority to punish internet providers that violate its guidelines. That is because of a rule that leaves oversight of those companies to the FCC." Still others, including all five of those who commented on Costello's analysis, pointed out that a user can choose not to use social media, web sites, apps or other applications that do not protect privacy to their satisfaction. But in many places, customers have only one choice of internet provider. "Stop it with the deflection to Google and Facebook, it makes you look ridiculous (and doesn't pass the smell test above)," Jeremy Powlus — who had initially noted "this post smells like it was written by a telecom lobbyist" — posted beneath Costello's analysis. "At least Google has a dashboard where I can see all of the data they've collected on me, delete portions of it, or opt out of it all together. Where's my ISP dashboard? Better yet, where's my ISP competition so that I can have some choices?" Costello serves on the Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Sub-Committee as well as the Communications and Technology Sub-Committee. According to the National Institute on Money in State Politics, Costello or his political action committees **received $38,740 in campaign contributions from the telecom industry** in the most recent election cycle. Vincent Galko, senior advisor to the Costello campaign, denied any connection between Costello's vote and the contributions, writing "your insinuation that contributions from some of the region's leading innovators and employers influenced the vote of three local congressmen is patently false and demonstrably political. Such an assertion dismisses the fact that over 210 other Members of the House and half the U.S. Senate voted to support this effort. It likewise dismisses the fact that these same contributors donated to some members who were on the other side of the issue," Galko wrote. "Unfortunately, understanding an issue and informing an audience of the facts so that they can make their own decisions requires more effort than simply restating a political press release," Galko wrote. Fitzpatrick serves on the Sub-Committee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection. According to the National Institute on Money in State Politics, **Fitzpatrick or his political action committees received $16,100 in campaign contributions from the telecom services and equipment industry** in the most recent election cycle. Whereas Meehan or his political action committees, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics, **received a cumulative $64,200 in campaign contributions from the telecom services and equipment industry** in the most recent election cycle. By way of response to a Digital First Media inquiry, Meehan spokesman John Elizandro provided **the text of a letter Meehan sent to constituents who raised questions about this issue**. "I've seen a lot of misinformation out there, both about the FCC's regulations and the impact that Congress' action will have on individuals' privacy as they browse the internet," Meehan wrote. The conflict between FTC and FCC rules also figured in Meehan's letter. "It was classic Washington: two federal agencies, working at cross-purposes, creating a regulatory maze and forcing American companies to navigate it. Both Republicans and Democrats have expressed their concerns, in writing, about the proposal," he wrote. "I chaired the House Homeland Security Committee's Cybersecurity Sub-Committee, where I worked extensively on online privacy concerns with groups like the American Civil Liberties Union," Meehan wrote.

"There is much we can do to strengthen and modernize online privacy rules to keep up with the changing face of the modern internet. Last-minute regulations, poorly conceived and poorly executed, are the wrong way to do it," wrote Meehan. "I'm going to continue to work with both Republicans and Democrats to push for thoughtful legislation and effective rule making that will better protect Americans' online identities." Fitzpatrick's office did not provide a response to the Digital First Media inquiry before deadline Wednesday. – ***West Chester Daily Local News***

The Federal Communications Commission said it would cede oversight of companies providing subsidized broadband service to low-income Americans, arguing the responsibility belongs to the states. The decision by FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, a Republican, is **his latest to rein in** his Democratic predecessor's more aggressive regulatory vision for the telecom agency. Then-Chairman Tom Wheeler last year **expanded the broadband program**, called Lifeline, offering companies a streamlined way to apply for internet subsidies.

Mr. Pai said Wednesday that while Lifeline isn't going away, the FCC would end the federal licensing process used for the subsidies. He also took steps to deny about 40 applications in the pipeline. Lifeline gives eligible customers a $9.25 monthly discount for voice or internet service. Wednesday's decision doesn't affect the 11.6 million subscribers paying for phone service using the program or the additional 3.5 million who use it to go online, though it will likely slow down the expansion of the internet portion.

Lifeline advocates said the lack of a federal licensing program would weaken efforts to provide internet service to more low-income Americans, especially if they live in states that have deregulated their telecom markets and don't have regulators equipped to handle the decision. "It's going to hurt rural and smaller states because of the time and effort that it takes to apply to 50 state public utility commissions," said Keith Krueger, chief executive of the Consortium for School Networking, a nonprofit that promotes technology in education. Mr. Krueger said the organization plans to work with schools on ways to get low-income students online but said the FCC's decision would complicate things.

The FCC has long struggled to sync regulations designed for the telephone era with programs serving internet users. Commissioners from both parties have pledged to take steps to bridge the digital divide that keeps low-income Americans from getting online, impeding their education and job prospects, but the regulations have often lagged behind those goals. Mignon Clyburn, the FCC's lone Democratic commissioner, criticized Mr. Pai's decision, saying in a statement that it "confirms that under this Administration low-income Americans will have less choice for Lifeline broadband, and potential providers who want to serve low-income Americans will face greater barriers to entry and regulatory uncertainty." – ***Wall Street Journal***

Federal regulators plan to reverse an Obama-era rule that prevented major television-station owners from buying stations or readily selling themselves, a move that could touch off a wave of deals among media companies. The proposal, which would effectively loosen a national cap on audience share for station owners that the rule had tightened, is scheduled to be put before the Federal Communications Commission in late April, an agency official said. Chairman Ajit Pai is expected to announce the plan on Thursday afternoon.

The longstanding ownership cap limits TV groups to a 39% national audience share. But for years, the government said station owners didn't have to fully count UHF stations in calculating their share because UHF was typically a less powerful signal. The Obama-era FCC eliminated the so-called UHF discount last September, contending that the distinction between UHF stations and VHF stations had effectively disappeared. The FCC under Mr. Pai is expected to revert to the previous rule in one of a series of actions he is taking as he plans to reverse several policies adopted under his predecessor, Tom Wheeler, who was FCC chairman for much of President Barack Obama's second term.

TV station owners have contended that fully counting the UHF channels unfairly penalized them at a time when other types of media have been growing rapidly. One CBS Corp. executive, Anne Lucey, complained in recent meetings with FCC officials that "our industry has been frozen in time" by the Obama-era rule, according to regulatory filings. Meanwhile, "our video competitors have marched on unfettered by ownership limits," she said. CBS and some other media companies asked the commission to reinstate the UHF discount, without waiting to launch a broader proceeding on media-ownership issues.

21st Century Fox, which shares ownership with The Wall Street Journal, challenged the Obama-era change in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, although the case has been on hold while the FCC weighs what to do. Despite that challenge, CEO James Murdoch recently indicated that the company doesn't have a "big appetite" to add more stations should the ownership regulations change. Independent TV company Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc. has urged the commission to get rid of the national cap entirely. "Television stations face increased national competition from a host of new services," including satellite and cable networks as well as internet providers, Sinclair said in a recent filing. "The national cap is simply no longer justified in today's media environment."

A coalition of consumer groups including Free Press has opposed the rollback. "Reversing the rule will allow these large group owners to grow larger" and make acquisitions harder for new entrants and smaller companies, said Andrew Schwartzman, a Georgetown University law professor who represents the coalition. For independent station owners like Sinclair, growing through acquisitions gives them more clout to negotiate lucrative carriage deals with cable providers. It also ensures they can hold their own in their affiliate relationships with national networks that supply their key programming, such as ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox. The parent companies of several of the big broadcasters also own some of their own stations, and buying more is a way to reduce the leverage of the independent groups.

The reinstatement of the UHF discount would give many broadcasters room to grow. Sinclair would see its current 38% share drop to 24% with the discount applied. Nexstar Media Group Inc.'s 39% attribution would decline to 26%, and Tegna Inc. would fall from 32% to 27%. Speaking on an earnings call last month, Tegna Media President Dave Lougee said changes to the ownership rules would be "a very good and overdue development for Tegna and the industry overall." Nexstar Chief Executive Perry Sook told investors and analysts last month that the company is "already in discussions should the rules change about opportunities that might be available to us."

CBS, which owns stations with an audience share of 38%, would also be able to become a buyer with the discount reducing its reach to around 25%. CBS CEO Leslie Moonves told analysts earlier this month that the company would welcome deregulation. "I can tell you in the right circumstance if the cap is lifted we would strategically want to buy some more stations because we think it is important," Mr. Moonves said.

A deal that many analysts and industry executives are anticipating is Sinclair acquiring Tribune Media Co., whose national reach of 44% would fall to 26%. Wells Fargo Securities analyst Marci Ryvicker in a recent report that such a purchase is "complicated but possible." Sinclair-Tribune combination would create a broadcasting behemoth of more than 200 local stations. Sinclair operates 173 TV stations, while Tribune owns or operates 42. Sinclair has a market cap of $4.1 billion, and Tribune's market cap is $3.2 billion.

Even with the reduced ownership reach that a UHF discount would bring, the combination would still likely require some stations to be sold off to keep in line with the 39% cap. Tribune exceeds the current 39% cap because its reach grew when the UHF discount was eliminated and the company was granted a waiver. Sinclair and Tribune have declined to comment. Besides Tribune, few potential sellers have emerged. "We see more buyers vs. sellers," Ms. Ryvicker said. While the return of the UHF discount will likely lead to some deals, television executives are also pining for a relaxation of the rules that limit the number of television stations one broadcaster can own in a market.

Currently, one company can own two TV stations in a market only if eight independent TV stations remain afterward. That limits such possibilities to big and midsize markets and leaves out smaller markets where many TV stations are economically challenged, broadcasters say. Nexstar's Mr. Sook has told investors the company wants to "pursue opportunities to grow our scale within local markets" and would be "appropriately aggressive on that front." Such changes would have to wait until later in the year, when the FCC appears likely to take up other changes to its media-ownership rules. Another rule change that would significantly lead to more deals and consolidation would be removing or relaxing the 39% cap itself, although that may not be in the agency's purview.

Republican FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly wrote in a 2016 rule-making procedure that Congress, not the commission, has the authority to alter the cap. Mr. O'Rielly said the cap is one of a handful of media-ownership rules exempted from the FCC's Quadrennial Review process in which the agency decides which regulations are still necessary and which should be changed or eliminated. – ***Wall Street Journal***

In one of its shortest meetings in recent memory, Lancaster City Council gave final approval Tuesday to financial arrangements related to rolling out the LanCity Connect broadband fiber-optic network. Members voted to approve an ordinance appropriating $1.5 million from the general fund for a working capital loan to Reading-based MAW Communications, the company building and operating the network. A second ordinance allocates another $1.5 million, from savings reaped when the city refinanced bonds for water infrastructure, to underwrite residential connections, which cost about $1,000 each. The loan will be paid back over 13 years at 7 percent interest. The residential connection subsidies will be earned back over time through a 13 percent surcharge applied to all LanCity Connect bills. – ***lancasteronline.com***

Getting Pennsylvania's spending under control is the focus of two bills advanced by the House State Government Committee. As a revised version of the Taxpayer Protection Act, House Bill 110 limits state spending increases to the combined rate of inflation and population growth. Any spending above this limit would require approval from three-fourths of the Legislature. And House Bill 410 mandates “an independent performance evaluation of state programs,” according to the Commonwealth Foundation, which estimates that state budget increases since 1970 have cost a family of four $16,413 (or $4,103 per resident). Pennsylvanians have paid enough for their lawmakers' lack of fiscal discipline. – ***Pittsburgh Tribune-Review***