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Gov. Brown, lawmakers announce plan to reform

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler is proposing that the agency retain most of the restrictions on common ownership of TV stations, radio outlets and newspapers in the same market. Wheeler circulated a proposal to commissioners on Monday that make only modest modifications to ownership restrictions.

Under one proposal, an existing ban on ownership of a broadcast station and newspaper in the same market would remain in place, but would be subject to exceptions "for failed or failing entities," according to the FCC. The current rules already allow for waivers. "Our analysis indicates that the ownership restrictions remain necessary in the public interest, though the realities of the media marketplace require some targeted modifications of a number of the rules," the FCC said in a fact sheet outlining the changes.

The FCC's current TV cross-ownership rule allows for the common ownership of a station in the same market, but only if just one of the stations are among the top four stations in that city, and that at least eight independently owned stations remained after the merger. The current radio and TV cross-ownership rule allows for common ownership of two TV stations and one radio station, regardless of the side of the market. The rule allows for the common ownership of additional radio stations based on how many independently owned outlets would remain after such a merger. Unchanged is a rule that prohibits the merger of any of the four broadcast networks.

The FCC is required to review its ownership rules every four years, but fell behind to the point that the 2010 and 2014 reviews were combined. The full commission will vote whether to approve the modifications. In May, a federal appeals court struck down FCC rules restricting joint sales agreements between TV stations because the agency had yet to complete the 2010 and 2014 reviews. Wheeler is now seeking to have those restrictions reinstated.

California PUC ***Politico*** **Clinton to unveil tech agenda**	The Newspaper Assn. of America has long sought to repeal the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule, put in place in 1975, arguing that such combinations are needed given the decline of print media. Dennis Wharton, spokesman for the National Assn. of Broadcasters, said that the ownership rules in general have "long ago outlived their usefulness." "It is shocking that regulators who bless mammoth mergers like AT&T/DirecTV and Charter/Time Warner Cable would still bar common ownership of two TV stations or broadcast/newspaper combinations in a local market," he said in a statement. "Ultimately, NAB hopes the five-member FCC, Congress or the courts end this indefensible FCC charade, and that meaningful ownership reform is adopted for the benefit of the millions of Americans reliant on free and local broadcasting." – ***Variety*** ____ Charter Communications, which **recently bought Time Warner Cable for $55.1 billion**, not only plans to dump the company's name — it's dumping Manhattan, too. Time Warner Cable will vacate 75,000 square feet of space at Time Warner Center when its lease is up at the end of 2016 , sources told us. It will mark the first office availability at the Columbus Center colossus since it was opened by Stephen M. Ross-led Related Cos. in 2003. The asking rent will be a whopping $150 a square foot, the sources said. Time Warner Cable — which was spun off from former parent Time Warner in 2009 — will relocate to Stamford, Conn., where Charter is headquartered. The cable provider now occupies floors 16 and 17 at Time Warner Center. The space was part of more than 1 million square feet that Related sold to Time Warner when the tower went up, but was re-purchased by Related in 2014 in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and GIC. Time Warner remains in the twin-towered building as a tenant until mid-2019, when the media giant will move to 30 Hudson Yards, the skyscraper that Related is building at Tenth Avenue and West 33rd Street. JLL's Peter Riguardi and Related's Stephen Winter in-house have been tapped to market the Time Warner Cable space, which boasts Central Park views. They declined to comment. Around 350 Time Warner Cable employees work at Columbus Circle, but it wasn't clear how many jobs would be lost (the company has other, smaller offices in town). A rep for Charter didn't get back to us. – ***New York Post*** ____ Pennsylvania lawmakers took a major step toward a new state budget Monday night with a bipartisan vote by the House Appropriations Committee for a $31.6 billion proposal assembled by the Republican majority. The spending plan was advanced by a 36-1 vote and was expected to be considered on the chamber floor sometime Tuesday. Neither the Senate nor Gov. Tom Wolf has signed off on the approach, which includes a $200 million boost for K-12 education and money to address Pennsylvania's opioid drug crisis. "This is, I think, a very good example of what we can do when we work together," said Rep. Joe Markosek of Allegheny County, the committee's ranking Democrat. The only "no" vote came from Rep. Jim Christiana, R-Beaver, who said afterward only that it was consistent with his prior budget votes. Assuming the House votes for it, which appears highly likely, it could land in the Senate with sufficient time to get enacted before the state's new fiscal year begins on Friday. Wolf spokesman Jeff Sheridan said the Democratic governor did not agree to the bill - he wants funding for education and to address the heroin problem, but he also thinks the spending plan should be balanced with sustainable revenue. "The governor looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature, and as the budget moves through the process, he is hopeful all sides can reach an agreement that achieves these goals," Sheridan said.

The bill that advanced out of Appropriations did not address new taxes, but supporters envision a package of higher levies on tobacco products as well as money from legislation pending in the House that would make Pennsylvania the fourth state to allow casino-style gambling online.

Tax fights are perpetually divisive in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman, R-Centre, said he had not agreed to the House GOP's spending proposal, or to across-the-board tax increases on tobacco products. The House budget under consideration also lacks wider agreement in the Capitol, Corman said. "If we want to be out of here June 30, there's no sense sending the governor something that he doesn't want, or at least won't agree to sign, and we can go down that road if we get to the point where we can't agree, but I think we're close enough we probably could agree if we just finalized it," Corman said.

His counterpart, Minority Leader Jay Costa, D-Allegheny, said the plan does not include money sought by Wolf and Democrats for distressed school districts, higher education institutions or heroin addiction treatment. Costa also said funding fell short by hundreds of millions of dollars. "What we know of this bill, we can't support this measure right now," Costa said.

Efforts to pass a budget ahead of the new fiscal year's start follow a record-breaking partisan budget stalemate in Wolf's first budget year, a deadlock that was not fully resolved until a few months ago. House Republicans have squeezed significant concessions from Wolf, who in February proposed a $33.3 billion spending plan - a 10 percent increase - backed by a $2.7 billion tax plan that also called for higher taxes on income, sales and Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling.

That had included a proposal to raise the per-pack cigarette tax to $2.60, from $1.60, and to extend a 40 percent wholesale tax to sales of larger cigars, loose tobacco, smokeless tobacco and electronic cigarettes. Those products are currently untaxed by Pennsylvania.

In recent weeks, Wolf and Democrats had pressed for a budget of around $31.9 billion. That had included $250 million extra for public schools and enough money to balance a long-term deficit projected at $1.8 billion in the 2016-2017 fiscal year by the Legislature's Independent Fiscal Office. Pennsylvania's $1.60 per pack tax on cigarettes is tied for the nation's 23rd highest with Ohio and Delaware, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Increasing it by $1 to $2.60 would make it the nation's 10th highest cigarette tax. – ***Associated Press***