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Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), the ranking member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, is expressing doubts about the FCC's latest set-top box proposal, which would require cable operators to offer apps of their channel feeds. "As I've said before, consumers do not like set-top boxes -- they are clunky, outdated, and needlessly expensive," he said in a statement on Monday. "While I commend Chairman Wheeler for working to solve this difficult issue, I'm concerned that this latest proposal will not work, particularly when it comes to licensing. Ultimately, I'm skeptical that the revised plan will benefit consumers."

Last week, FCC chairman Tom Wheeler unveiled a proposal that would require that cable operators offer free apps that would enable subscribers to forgo the rental of set-top boxes. A licensing body, made up of representatives the cable and satellite business and content providers, would license the app to device makers, but the FCC would have oversight. A vote is scheduled on the proposal on Sept. 29. A spokeswoman for Wheeler said in a statement, "We continue to have productive conversations with all stakeholders about Chairman Wheeler's apps-based proposal to ensure consumers have the options they deserve - and that Congress mandated - to access the programming they already pay for."



multichannel distributors, known as MVPDs, actually proposed an app-based approach in June. It was a compromise to an earlier FCC proposal that would have required them to supply program fees to device manufacturers so consumers could buy their own set-top boxes. But MVPDs are objecting to the new proposal, including requirements that they make app software available on all widely deployed platforms. The MVPDs wanted to limit app development to HTML5, but the FCC wants no specific standards. "They may choose to develop apps themselves or provide the necessary code to a third-party developer to develop an app on behalf of the pay-TV provider," the FCC said in a fact-sheet outlining the proposal.

Programmers, including studios and cable networks, are raising objections over plans for the licensing body. Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, who may be the swing vote on the proposal, participated in a conference call with programming representatives on Thursday. According to an ex-parte filing, the programmers told her that "any arrangement in which they are required to allow their content to be distributed on terms or conditions to which programmers would not agree would be tantamount to a compulsory copyright license."

But the FCC spokeswoman said that programmers "would have a seat at the table" in licensing, and the FCC "would have limited oversight to ensure industry doesn't act anti-competitively and limit consumer choice. In addition, the proposal prohibits altering terms of contracts between programmers and pay-TV providers."

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heats up**

Wheeler says his proposal is designed to boost competition in TV navigation devices, citing the average \$231-per-year that consumers pay to rent their cable boxes. The issue is expected to come up on Thursday when the Senate Energy and Commerce Committee holds an oversight hearing with all five commissioners. – *Variety*

Should the feds do more to oversee how companies deliver the Internet? Netflix says the answer is yes, telling the Federal Communications Commission that it should ban data caps for home Internet and also do something about “zero rating” --a practice in which T-Mobile and other phone companies let consumers watch **certain shows** free of data charges.

Netflix’s position, which it set out in **a filing** last week, amount to a wish list of sorts as the FCC gets ready to prepare an annual report for Congress about the state of broadband access in the United States. According to Netflix, broadband caps on home Internet are inconsistent with a part of the Telecommunications Act that calls for advanced telecommunications to be deployed to all Americans “in a reasonable and timely fashion.”

The company points to the growing popularity of “Internet television” to say caps of 300 GB of data per month are impractical, noting that 3.4 hours of HD Netflix use can consume 10 GB of data--meaning it would be easy for a household to blow through its allotted monthly caps. Netflix also claims such caps, which Comcast is unrolling in a growing number of U.S. markets, are not necessary for technical reasons but are simply a money grab. While home broadband caps may be a big issue for U.S. consumers affected them, the bigger issue in the Netflix filing is likely to be the “zero rating” one.

Within the last six months, the big phone carriers have been rolling out a growing number of promotions that let consumers watch certain types of content without depleting their monthly data allotment. But as Netflix points out, these sort of arrangements may be technically illegal since they violate the FCC’s “net neutrality” rules, which forbid internet providers giving special treatment to some types of content over others.

So far the FCC, which already has its hands full in a **fight over TV apps**, has taken a wait-and-see approach to zero rating but this may get harder as the companies continue to **push the boundaries** in how they offer content. “The Commission’s informal policy review into this issue is ongoing. Chairman Wheeler said the Commission would keep an eye on new developments in this area and we are continuing to do so,” said Kim Hart, a spokesperson for the agency.

The Netflix **filing**, which was spotted by Ars Technica, comes as the FCC prepares its 2017 “**Broadband Progress Report**,” an annual document required by Congress that typically comes out in late January. – *Fortune*

Eligible adults have until Oct. 11 to registered to vote in the Nov. 8 election, which is highlighted by the presidential race between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump. “The deadline is approaching quickly,” Secretary of State Pedro A. Cortés said in a statement. “Registering is the first step in exercising our fundamental right to vote.”

Aside from president, the other statewide contests are for U.S. senator, and state attorney general, auditor general and treasurer. Regional contests will be held for 18 U.S. House seats, odd-numbered state Senate districts and all state House seats. The registration deadline affects anyone registering to vote for the first time or make changes to their existing registration status, according to the Pennsylvania Department of State. Those wishing to use an absentee ballot are urged to get moving and send the forms back by Oct. 21 to make sure they are counted in the final county tallies.

State voting requirements are: 18 years of age, a U.S. citizen for at least one month before the election; and a resident of a specific county for at least 30 days prior to election. The department’s online system — **register.votesPA.com** — is a fast way to sign up or make changes to your name, address or party affiliation. Registration closes at midnight on Oct. 11. Applications can also be printed out from this website, saving you a trip to a library or other government building.

Eligible Pennsylvanians may also use 2Vote, a new voter registration text messaging service. T0ext “PA” to “2Vote” (28683) on a cell phone to receive a link to the department’s online voter registration application. “Due to the 3-day time frame and cutbacks in service by the U.S. Postal Service, voters are strongly urged to mail their absentee ballot request no later than Oct. 21, two weeks before the voted ballot must be received by the county office,” the department states.

Voters may deliver their voted absentee ballots in person to county election offices or mail them if there is adequate time for delivery. A postmark is not sufficient for the ballot to be counted. For more information on voter registration, call the Department of State’s toll-free hotline at 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772)

or visit VotesPA.com. – **Allentown Morning Call**

Donald Trump will back campaigning in Pennsylvania on Tuesday. He'll be appearing at a closed-door event at the Aston Community Center in suburban Philadelphia. President Barack Obama will be in Philadelphia the same day to rally support for Hillary Clinton. He's also attending an event for the Democratic National Committee. Trump's running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, will hold a public rally Wednesday night in northeastern Pennsylvania. It's being held at the Kenworth of Pennsylvania truck dealership in Dunmore. – **Associated Press**



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