○ **ISSUE 9** │ ○ **VOL 12-6** │ ○ **2019**

Alexicon
insider

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

ReConnect Funds Going to Alaska

An $18.88 million grant under the RUS Re-Connect Pilot Program is was awarded to improve connectivity for almost 270 households in Yakutat, Alaska. The New Internet Communications for Everyone in Yakutat (NICEY) FTTH network will target all 662 year-round residents and businesses in the community. The network will be connected via a 230-mile Cordova Telecom microwave middle-mile network to the community of Cordova. There, the network will connect to the provider's submarine fiber. The RUS announced further awards this week.

Sanders Announces Broadband Plan

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders is promising to invest $150 billion to bring high-speed internet to "every household in America" while breaking up and better regulating monopolies he says currently limit access to drive up their profits.

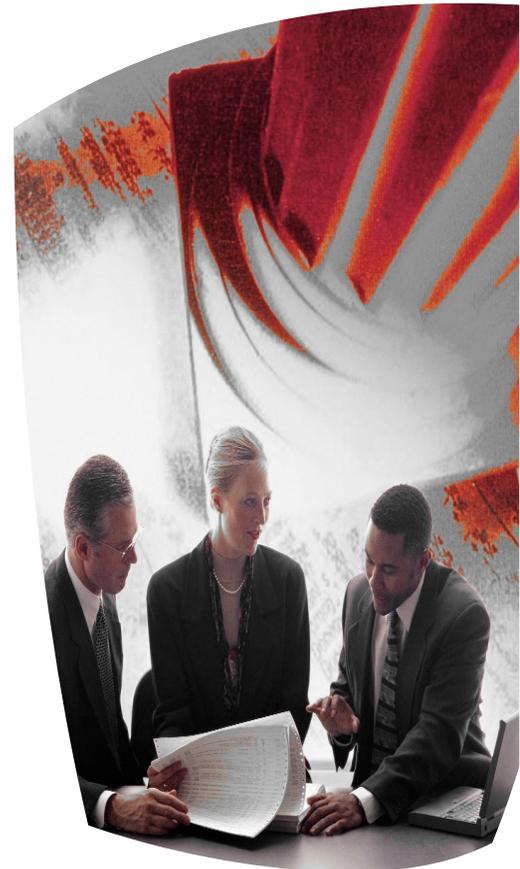## Huawei Sues Over FCC Decision

China's Huawei mounted a legal challenge against the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Thursday after the body designated the technology giant as a security threat and moved to bar it from a government subsidy program.

House Passes Anti-Robocall Bill

The House of Representatives on Wednesday approved an anti-robocall bill by an almost unanimous vote. The measure also enjoys support in the Senate, making it likely the legislation reaches President Trump's desk before the end of the year.

Republican Privacy Bill

A draft consumer privacy bill written by Republican U.S. Senator Roger Wicker's staff would set nationwide rules for handling of personal information online and elsewhere and override state laws, including one in California set to take effect next year.

Market Watch

More Risk of Pay TV Cord Cutting

Video Will Consume 76% of Mobile Bandwidth

CBRS Expected to Launch by Year-End

AT&T Addresses Video Strategy

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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

AT&T Adds Blimps to FirstNet Arsenal

AT&T said it is adding a blimp to its emergency-coverage options for its FirstNet public-safety communications service. The blimp will join three drones that AT&T is already using for coverage alternatives. Also, AT&T just announced that more than 10,000 public-safety agencies -- totalling a whopping 1 million connections -- have signed on to its FirstNet service.

Broadband in Rural America

The One-Traffic-Light Town with Some of the Fastest Internet in the U.S. - Connecting rural America to broadband is a popular talking point on the campaign trail. In one Kentucky community, it's already a way of life. Subscribers to Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative (P.R.T.C.), which covers all of Jackson County and the adjacent Owsley County, can get speeds of up to one gigabit per second, and the coöperative is planning to upgrade the system to ten gigabits.

Minority Broadband Initiative

Much has been said about the importance of high-speed Internet to the economy, education and the future of health care in U.S. communities. But these benefits and others can be hard to ponder or explore in a rural community that doesn't have a sufficient technological foundation for broadband. James Clark, president of South Carolina State University (SC State), believes the newly launched Minority Broadband Initiative (MBI) from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) can get the wheels turning in the heads of rural Americans.

Malware, Ransomware Detections Down

Because Windows Defender ships with all new Windows OS versions, no cyber-security firm can ever dream of having an insight into today's malware scene as Microsoft does. As the year draws to a close, we've checked with Microsoft's interactive Security Intelligence Report to get an idea of what happened on the malware and security front for Windows users in 2019.

Ransomware Targets NAS Devices

The number of ransomware strains targeting NAS and backup storage devices is growing, with users "unprepared" for the threat, researchers say. Ransomware comes in many forms and guises. The malware variant is popular with cybercriminals and is used in attacks against the enterprise, critical services -- including hospitals and utilities -- and individuals.

In Focus

Pai Signals Revised MFII Staff Issues Report on Coverage Mapping

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai announced what could be a major shift in the already-adopted Mobility Phase II to focus on supporting the deployment of 5G capable infrastructure. According to the News Release, the $9 billion "5G Fund" will "replace the planned Mobility Fund Phase II, which would have provided federal support for 4G LTE service in unserved areas."

The new fund would encompass the original MFII budget of $4.53 over 10 years, plus another $4.5 billion over 10 years to be raised through USF contributions. It is expected that, if passed (an NPRM is expected early next year) the support would be awarded via reverse auction—in much the same way the MFII support was to awarded.

The current MFII proceeding stalled when the challenge process for the areas eligible for support turned up some concerning results. 48 carriers filed data to assist in establishing the MFII eligible areas, and 106 entities participated in the coverage challenge process. During the challenge process, 21 entities submitted 20.8 million speed tests across 37 states. Only two carriers—Verizon and T-Mobile provided any defense of their coverage maps. Based on the abbreviated challenges process, the FCC launched an investigation on December 8, 2018.

Concurrent with Chairman Pai's announcement, Commission Staff issued a report of the investigation's findings. According to the report, Commission field agents drove nearly 10,000 miles conducting 24,649 tests in 12 states across six drive test routes. As a result,

Staff finds the MFII coverage maps submitted by Verizon, U.S. Cellular, and T-Mobile overstated each carrier's actual coverage. Staff was unable to determine the reason for every difference noted between the carriers' model-predicted and on-the-ground coverage, and given this, recommends (1) the Commission terminate the MFII challenge process, (2) an Enforcement Advisory should be released that, among other items, reminds reporting carriers of the penalties associated with violating FCC rules, (3) the FCC should review Verizon, T-Mobile, and US Cellular Form 477 data, and (4) standards should be adopted in the Digital Opportunity Data Collection (DODC) proceeding to ensure mobile coverage data is accurate.

This investigation report and 5G Fund announcement are a bit difficult to connect—rejecting unreliable 4G LTE reporting and then opting for funding a technology that has not been widely deployed is a curious move on Chairman Pai's part. Clearly, much work will need to be done before any carrier's submitted 5G coverage data can be relied upon to award $9 billion in support over 10 years. In addition, while at least two carriers—Verizon and T-Mobile—were found to have submitted inaccurate data, no penalties will be levied by the FCC.

Finally, finding an additional $450m per year in the existing USF mechanisms might prove to be a bit difficult, especially considering the recent proposal to adopt an overall cap on everything.

Alexicon at Work

Alexicon continues to work with various vendors and national associations in order to assist with broadband mapping data issues. Current tasks include working with CostQuest (the firm responsible for the CACM and which is working on the BSLF proposal) to determine the best way to count locations, and with NTCA to work out a process to challenge CAF BLS deployment obligation locations should the need arise.

Questions? Comments?
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