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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Bill Would Provide \\$2b to Small Carriers](#)

The U.S. Senate has introduced a bipartisan bill, the Keeping Critical Connections Act (S.3569), cosponsored by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND), that would reportedly appropriate \$2 billion to compensate small rural carriers, with fewer than 250,000 customers, for providing free or discounted broadband service to low-income households or for providing distance-learning capability to students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[New Rural Broadband Funding Bill](#)

Congress continues to add to the rolls of bills seeking more funding for broadband buildouts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reps. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) and Bill Johnson (R-Ohio) have introduced the Serving Rural America Act. The bill would authorize \$500 million over five years for a pilot grant program overseen by the FCC.

[FCC Rural 5G Fund—Eligible Areas](#)

The FCC today released state-by-state data about areas that could be eligible for the proposed \$9 billion Rural 5G Fund auction. As much as 67% of the U.S. landmass in 49 states and three U.S. territories could be eligible, depending on which of two options for determining eligible areas the FCC chooses.

[Libraries Want to be Broadband Hubs](#)

Representing 58,000 members, the American Library Association (ALA) asked the FCC last month to ensure public WiFi access despite library closures. In a letter, ALA urged the Commission “to use its authority to immediately address the crisis-driven digital divide caused by work and school closures and social-distancing requirements.”

[China Telecom in FCC Crosshairs](#)

Multiple Cabinet-level federal agencies on Thursday recommended that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) revoke authorizations for China Telecom, a state-owned company, to operate services...



Market Watch

[COVID-19 Rural Broadband Performance](#)

[Pandemic Broadband is Working](#)

[No NFL Could Spell Cord Cutting Chaos](#)

[Frontier Laments Lack of Fiber](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Remote Working Checklist

The office coffee machine has never been quieter at 10 o'clock in the morning on a weekday. As governments ask workers to stay confined to fight back against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical offices are shutting down one after the other, and businesses are entering the world's largest work-from-home experiment to date. Employee laptops are being stockpiled, whiteboard meetings have switched to shared-screen video conferences, and after-work drinks are surviving in the form of Slack channels.

No—5G Does Not Cause the Coronavirus

Online conspiracy theories have been trying to link the novel coronavirus pandemic to the rollout of 5G technology recently. Despite there being no scientific links, multiple 5G towers have been set on fire in the UK. Theories shared on Facebook, Nextdoor, and Instagram are being widely spread, leading FEMA and the FCC to very clearly state: "5G technology does NOT cause coronavirus."

Telehealth and Security

In the face of the ongoing public health crisis, telehealth is experiencing an explosion in demand. And with this demand, there is no doubt that hackers will try to take advantage of a chaotic situation. According to Natali Tshuva, CEO of IoT security company Sternum, more and more hackers are likely to target remote monitoring and medical devices, which could be dangerous, even lethal, for users.

Coronavirus Surveillance & Privacy

Concerns around the use of personal data to track and halt the spread of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic led senators and tech industry groups on Thursday to urge Congress to ramp up its efforts to put in place a national consumer privacy law. "The collection of consumer location data to track the coronavirus, although well intentioned and possibly necessary at this time, further underscores the need for uniform, national privacy legislation," Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chairman Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) wrote in an opening statement...

Network Usage Starts to Plateau

Broadband usage in areas that have been under quarantine policies due to COVID-19 may have reached their peak, according to OpenVault. OpenVault, which collects cable subscribers' usage behaviors and puts them into data sets, said on Tuesday that rapid growth levels in those areas were starting to taper off. After three weeks of double-digit percentage growth, the total downstream data usage in markets with shelter-at-home policies declined almost 6% during the week of March 30–April 3



IN FOCUS FCC COVID-19 Telehealth Program

The CARES Act, signed into law on March 27, contained a \$200m appropriation for the FCC to use in support of health care providers in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The FCC recently released a [Report and Order](#) detailing how this funding will be distributed.

The purpose of the COVID-19 Telehealth program is to assist eligible health care providers in the purchase of telecommunications and information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services. Some examples of supported services, which generally track those supported by the FCC's Rural Health Care program, are:

- Telecommunications and broadband connectivity services
- Information services, including remote patient monitoring platforms and services
- Internet connected devices and equipment

Funding under this program, which is not from the federal USF, will be available to providers in rural and non-rural areas. In addition, funding will not be available for unconnected devices that patients use at home and then share results with their health care provider remotely.

The FCC will award funding on a rolling basis, and until the \$200m has been depleted or the current pandemic has ended. In order to obtain support, a health care provider will have to submit a streamlined application via the FCC's online portal, which is scheduled to open on April 13 ([Public Notice](#)). Potential applicants, especially if

they are new to the world of rural telehealth programs, will have to take a number of steps prior to applying: (1) obtain an eligibility determination from USAC ([Form 460](#)). Providers with previous USAC determinations can rely on those when applying for COVID-19 Telehealth program funding; (2) obtain an FCC Registration Number (FRN); and (3) register with the System for Award Management.

Providers eligible for COVID-19 Telehealth program support are generally consistent with those participating in the FCC's Rural Health Care program. These eligible providers include community health centers, local health departments or agencies, community mental health centers, rural health clinics, and not-for-profit hospitals.

The Wireline Competition Bureau will make a webinar presentation available on Monday, April 13 at 11:00 am eastern for those looking to apply. This presentation will be available at the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program page: <https://www.fcc.gov/covid-19-telehealth-program>. More information for potential applicants is available [here](#).

For more FCC actions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/coronavirus>



Alexicon at Work

Working from Home

Alexicon consultants continue to work from home during the pandemic, and there always seems to be plenty of things to do, from USF filings to upcoming filings like CAF ICC and Form 481s.

And please, if you require Rob Strait's presence on a video call, notify him ahead of time because you just don't know what his work from home attire may be on any given day. You will thank me, seriously.



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