

November 3, 2020

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INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[FCC Reaffirms Net Neutrality Order](#)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted along party lines ... to reaffirm its order rolling back net neutrality regulations in response to a request from the courts. The commission voted 3-2 in a decision reaffirming the Restoring Internet Freedom Order, with Chairman Ajit Pai (R), who voted with the majority, arguing the order promotes public safety and facilitates broadband infrastructure deployment.

[RDOF Auction Details](#)

The historic Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction [got] underway [October 29]. It's a reverse auction that will award up to \$16 billion to cover some of the costs of bringing broadband to unserved areas... The \$16 billion, which will be distributed over ten years, comes from universal service funding that historically was allocated to large telcos like AT&T, Verizon, Frontier, and others for rural service territories.

[ReConnect Round 2 Exceeds \\$615M](#)

Round 2 of the USDA ReConnect Program invested an additional \$46 million in 10 projects in seven states over the past few days. The investments, which all are for fiber-to-the-premise networks, bring the USDA ReConnect Round 2 total to \$615,969,825.

[FCC Fines Robocaller \\$37.5M](#)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has brought the hammer down again in an attempt to get a handle on the explosion of robocalls, fining Affordable Enterprises of Arizona \$37.5 million for making millions of illegally spoofed calls.

[GAO Report on Federal USF](#)

The FCC should improve how it tracks the effectiveness of the Universal Service Fund high-cost program, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office. The Government Accountability Office USF review also had harsh words for the contribution system through which the high-cost program is funded.



Market Watch

[BroadbandNow—Broadband Availability Report](#)

[Verizon 5G Home Expands](#)

[T-Mobile Expands Midband 5G](#)

[Video Cord Cutter Forecast](#)



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Questions? Comments?

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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Hackers Targeting US Hospitals

The FBI, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) warned Wednesday that cybercriminals were stepping up ransomware attacks on health sector groups as the organizations grappled with a new wave of COVID-19 cases.

Microsoft US Election Warning

Microsoft has warned Windows 10 customers that it has received "a small number of reports" about attacks on its Netlogon protocol, which it patched in August. The Windows maker issued another alert on Thursday following its warning in September that attackers were exploiting the elevation of privilege vulnerability affecting the Netlogon Remote Protocol (MS-NRPC). It's a protocol used by admins for authenticating Windows Server as a domain controller. The flaw it contained was serious enough for the DHS' CISA to order US government agencies to apply Microsoft's patch...

Internet Platform Regulation

At the start of a new decade, the internet is fragile and fractured. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the digital divide into sharp relief, with millions of Americans struggling to get online. Large social networks have created new venues for speech and creativity but at the cost of harassment, radicalization, eroded privacy, and an uncertain future for small businesses and media outlets. Online spaces have never been more important. Because of that, their problems have never been more obvious.

Paying Ransomware Hackers

Hackers hit German enterprise integration and IoT platform Software AG with ransomware twice this month. On Oct. 5 data was downloaded from the company's servers and employees' notebooks, and its internal systems were disrupted. The hackers reportedly demanded more than US\$20 million to de-encrypt the data.

Malicious Internet Traffic Doubles

Akamai Technologies is impressed by the amazing traffic levels on the internet during the coronavirus pandemic, and the world technology infrastructure's ability to handle it. But during the stay-at-home boom, the web and cybersecurity expert also has been closely watching a boom in bad actors. With so many people working from home, hackers are taking advantage, and massively increasing the number of attacks as daily routine changes caused by the pandemic are prolonged, and become potentially permanent.

IN FOCUS

FCC Establishes 5G Fund

The FCC officially moved its much-hyped [5G Fund for Rural America](#) forward last week. The 5G Fund, formerly known as Mobility Fund Phase II, will distribute up to \$9 billion over the next 10 years to bring 5G connectivity to rural areas. Support from the 5G Fund, much like CAF Phase II and RDOF, will be awarded via a competitive, multi-round reverse auction.

There are two phases contemplated for the auction: Phase I will award up to \$8 billion of support to areas lacking unsubsidized 4G LTE or 5G mobile broadband, with \$680 million targeted specifically to Tribal areas. Eligible areas—a major reason why Mobility Fund Phase II was delayed and rebranded— will be determined with coverage data to be developed pursuant to the Digital Opportunity Data Collection proceeding. Phase II will provide up to \$1 billion in additional support for “the deployment of technologically innovative 5G networks that facilitate precision agriculture.”

In the context of the 5G Fund, “5G” means (1) networks that meet at least the 5G-NR (New Radio) technology standards developed by the 3rd Generation Partnership Project with Release 15 (or any successor release that may be adopted by the Office and Bureau after appropriate notice and comment) with median download and upload speeds of at least 35 Mbps and 3 Mbps with minimum cell edge download and upload speeds of 7 Mbps and 1 Mbps; (2) meeting end-to-end round trip data latency measurements of 100 milliseconds or below; (3) offering at least one service plan that includes a minimum monthly data allowance that is equivalent to the average United States subscriber data usage.

The term of support will be 10 years, and support recipients will be expected to meet certain public interest obligation milestones: 40% of total square kilometers covered by the end of year 3; 60% by end of year 4; 80% by end of year 5; and 85% by the end of year 6.

The FCC also addresses the legacy support currently being provided to certain carriers. This relates to the phase-down of competitive carrier support under the previous “identical support” rule, where the CETC received a reduced amount of support until the Mobility Fund Phase II process was complete. The process will require that legacy support recipients use an increasing percentage of their support toward 5G service. It will also require competitive ETCs receiving legacy high-cost support to meet specified coverage requirements until such legacy support begins to phase down or otherwise ceases.

Given that Phase I of the 5G Fund auction will not start until the FCC has generated “precise and granular” mobile broadband coverage data via the DODC process, which could take up to 18-24 months, the starting date is still a year or two off. According to Chairman Pai, the chosen method “doesn’t provide the fastest possible path to the Phase I auction. But this measured approach enjoyed broad support in the record and will ensure that we are targeting funding to those areas that need the support the most, allowing us to make the best use of every dollar in the 5G Fund.”

Reminders

- ⇒ **988 Suicide Prevention Hotline.** Mandatory 10-digit dialing transition has started for certain area codes containing 988 NXXs. See the 8/19/20 Special Bulletin and 8/20/20 email distribution of the NANPA transition schedule.
- ⇒ Providers that block robocalls are required to establish a **single point of contact** for resolving unintended or inadvertent blocking.
- ⇒ **Reassigned numbers database** recordkeeping requirements for small providers begin 1/27/2021. (See 8/10/20 Special Bulletin)



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