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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Robocalls Could Change June 30](#)

A big deadline in the fight to beat back those annoying robocalls is here. As of [June 30], every major voice provider in the US, including phone companies AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile and cable provider Comcast, will need to implement a technology called Stir/Shaken designed to curb the tide of spam calls.

[\\$65B Broadband Infrastructure Proposal](#)

Just days after Republicans and Democrats reportedly reached an agreement to allocate \$65 billion for broadband infrastructure as part of broader infrastructure investment legislation, Blair Levin, ...Washington D.C. insider, shared what he has been hearing about how the money would be allocated.

[Lifeline Program Waiver Extended](#)

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (the Bureau) waived a number of Lifeline program rules in seven previous Orders to provide necessary relief for low-income individuals.

[NTIA Broadband Map Released](#)

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has released an interactive map that displays broadband availability across the country. The map compiles public and private data, including FCC data, internet usage indicators, speed-test statistics, and internet access, as reported in the Census Bureau's American Community survey, to display which areas of the country need broadband the most.

[FCC Addresses Chinese Equipment](#)

The Federal Communications Commission plans to vote July 13 on an order that would allow it to reimburse larger telecommunications companies—in addition to smaller rural providers—for removing equipment from Chinese firms considered a threat to national security from their networks. The order issued Tuesday applies to recipients of Universal Service Funds, a \$9-billion-per-year pot of public money used to expand access...



Market Watch

[Fiber Association Study on Broadband Speeds](#)

[WideOpenWest Unloads Markets](#)

[AT&T/Microsoft Cloud and 5G Core Deal](#)

[RDOF Winner to Help Electric Co-ops](#)



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Questions? Comments?
Contact Chris Barron

cbarron@alexicon.net

Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

OneWeb Launches Satellites

Britain-based tech company OneWeb sent 36 satellites into orbit on Thursday, a landmark launch it said would pave the way for it to begin rolling out a commercial internet service in swathes of the northern hemisphere this year. OneWeb, which has more than 200 satellites in orbit as part of push to provide a global internet service, said the launch from Russia's Far East would allow it to offer connectivity everywhere north of 50 degrees latitude.

GCI's Remote TERRA Towers in AK

Alaska-based regional operator GCI is initiating its annual refueling of 22 mountaintop towers in remote areas of Alaska. The initiative is necessary because the towers – which are part of the Terrestrial for Every Rural Region in Alaska (TERRA) network — are in some of the state's rugged western and northwestern terrain. They are off the grid and reachable only by helicopter. All told, GCI crews will make more than 200 round trips this summer to deliver about 102,000 gallons of diesel fuel to support TERRA...

Starlink Update—Mobile Backhaul/CPE

During a keynote address at the Mobile World Congress, taking place in Barcelona, Spain this week, Elon Musk offered an update on SpaceX's Starlink satellite broadband service. Citing the service as “[f]illing in the gaps between 5G and fiber,” Musk highlighted several notable plans including a role for Starlink with mobile operators.

Heat Causes StarLink Problems

It has been an unusually hot summer already, especially in the west. That heatwave is giving some SpaceX Starlink users some real trouble, in the form “thermal shutdowns,” where users are losing their internet connections from the satellite broadband service. A Reddit user group has been documenting the problem, with several commenters sharing screenshots of alerts regarding overheating of Starlink equipment. SpaceX is telling Starlink users that the equipment might experience overheating when the temperature reaches 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

Broadband Gap and Redlining

When Christina Wilson moved into Los Angeles public housing with her husband and teenage daughter four years ago, she tried to transfer her internet service plan to her new home. But, as is the case with many low-income communities in the US, the ISP didn't serve the Housing Authority of Los Angeles' Imperial Courts. In fact, no internet service providers offered speedy plans for any of LA's public housing facilities. Instead, they only offered pricey, slow plans...



IN FOCUS Contributions Reform Possible?

After FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr floated a new and unique way to fund universal service in an [op-ed published in Newsweek](#), and acting FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel [sounded supportive](#) of the idea, an issue that has plagued universal service policy in the United States seems to be on the front burner once again. After several years of former Commissioner Michael O'Rielly opposing any move to reform USF contributions—both as an FCC commissioner and as the FCC member on the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service—the FCC looks like it could agree on moving forward, if not the specific way to get there.

Commissioner Carr—careful not utter the taboo phrase “taxing the internet” - foresees a USF contribution mechanism where “big tech” and “big streamers” such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and Facebook would pay directly into the USF. Consumers, other than possibly facing higher streaming fees, would not directly pay into the USF under this proposal. Considering the current mechanism, based on an assessment of certain interstate end user revenues that excludes broadband internet access service, is clearly in what Commissioner Carr calls a “death spiral” as it produces an assessment rate that is now consistently above 30%, the time to act is here. Indeed, Commissioner Carr recently stated that “the iron is hot” in Washington, D.C. to address this issue and fundamentally change the USF contribution method.

As it stands, Carr's proposal does not “tax the internet” nor does it provide payment directly to rural providers to offset certain costs, such as middle mile, that have skyrocketed due to the ever-increasing amount of streaming traffic. As such, Congressional action is almost

certainly necessary to enact such a plan. Unlike other plans, such as that advocated for by the [state members of the Joint Board](#) that called for a connections-based approach, Carr's plan largely falls outside of the current statute in Section 254, which limits “equitable and nondiscriminatory” contributions to providers of “telecommunications services.”

A case can certainly be made that tech companies offering streaming services have seen their business explode on the backs of broadband networks, and have done so without contributing to programs attempting to ensure the universal availability of such networks. The current system is unsustainable—the assessable revenue base is in steep decline, while the demand for support of universal service, mostly broadband-based (high cost, Lifeline, E-rate, and rural health care) continues to grow. The FCC recognized this conundrum in its recent [order](#) waiving application of the Budget Control Mechanism: “The Commission has long recognized the need to balance of principles of section 254(b) to ensure that support is sufficient with avoiding an excessive burden on all ratepayers that contribute to the Fund.”

While progress certainly seems possible in the near future, much of it depends on the willingness of Congress to act...

Reminders

⇒ **Reassigned Numbers Database.** All carriers receiving NANP numbering resources are currently required to maintain records of the most recent date each number was permanently disconnected and must age telephone numbers for at least 45 days after disconnection and before reassignment. This requirement became affective for small providers on January 27, 2021.

- * **Beginning October 15, 2021,** Small providers will be required to report to the online [reassigned numbers database](#) on the 15th of every month
- * For more information see the 8/10/20 Special Bulletin and 2/9/21 email reminder



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cbarron@alexicon.net