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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

Troubles for RDOF Winner LTD

LTD Broadband, which was the largest winning bidder in last year’s FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction, has asked the commission to reconsider its decision involving the carrier’s application for eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) status in California, alleging “egregious misconduct” on the part of the attorney

NTIA Creates New Broadband Offices

The U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) established two new offices to handle all its upcoming, additional broadband workload.

EBB Program Enrolls 5M Households

A new federal program that offers \$50 a month to pay for internet service has enrolled 5 million households, the Federal Communications Commission said Friday.

Schools Seek \$5.1B from ECF

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) revealed plans to open a second application window for Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) support after an initial round elicited an overwhelming response from schools and libraries looking to purchase broadband service and connected devices.

FCC Warning: Fake Subsidy Website

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) flagged the discovery of a website which falsely offered to enroll consumers in the agency’s Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program and urged those who visited it to take steps to protect themselves against fraud.

FCC \$5m Robocall Fine

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Tuesday proposed a fine of more than \$5 million for conservative activists Jack Burkman and Jacob Wohl for making over 1,000 illegal robocalls without prior consent.



Market Watch

[Nokia Scores Rip & Replace Deal](#)

[WOW Home Internet Review](#)

[TDS Building 2Gbps Idaho Network](#)

[AT&T, Cisco 5G IoT Collaboration](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

5G Backup to Cover Broadband Outages

We've been having persistent problems with our fiber to the cabinet VDSL connection over the past few months. It's the worst kind of fault, intermittent and prone to happen when we're on a call or trying to download software. We've changed the router, even had engineers out to check the connection. Our ISP has changed our wholesale provider (as much as they can), the cabling provider has changed the cable we're using and the port in the fiber cabinet, but nothing seems to work.

Post-COVID Shift to Telehealth Services

An annual survey of some of the nation's largest businesses finds that many expanded their telehealth services during the pandemic, and they expect to continue that trend to address, among other things, mental health and the social determinants of health. Roughly three-quarters of the nation's large businesses expanded their telehealth programs for employees during the pandemic...

Report: Threat of Internet Shutdowns

State actors across the world are increasingly resorting to shutting down access to the internet, according to a new report out Wednesday. The groups behind the report — the digital rights nonprofit Access Now and Google's research unit Jigsaw — hope it will help bring attention to what they call a growing human rights threat.

How to Avoid Getting Hacked

Using unsupported software, allowing the use of default usernames and passwords and using single-factor authentication for remote or administrative access to systems are all dangerous behaviors when it comes to cybersecurity and should be avoided by all organizations — but particularly those supporting critical infrastructure. The warning comes from the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), which is developing a catalogue of "exceptionally risky" behaviors that can put critical infrastructure at extra risk of falling victim to cyberattacks.

Zoom Growth Tapers Off

Zoom Video Communications Inc shares (ZM.O) tumbled nearly 17%... after the video conferencing company signaled a faster-than-expected drop in demand and analysts questioned its future plans as people return to office. Zoom and other video conferencing services such as Cisco (CSCO.O), Microsoft's (MSFT.O) Teams and Salesforce's (CRM.N) Slack raked in millions of new users as the pandemic forced people to work, study and communicate with friends...



IN FOCUS The Future of USF

The question of what the future of the federal USF program looks like is an increasingly vital one. In fact, it was raised in the recent bipartisan infrastructure bill that passed the U.S. Senate ([HR 3684](#)—INVEST in America Act) - the FCC would be required to issue a report on the future of universal service given the actions taken in the bill. Of course, this question has been of keen interest to the rural broadband industry since the inception of the federal USF, especially since 2011 when the FCC significantly revised the purpose of the programs.

Currently, the federal high cost support programs (HCLS, CAF BLS, ACAM, CAF, Alaska Plan) are either operating under a defined term (e.g., ACAM II's support term ends in 2027, and CAF BLS deployment obligations must be met by 2023) or are quickly becoming obsolete (HCLS in the era of broadband only services). The obvious question is what comes next? The answer is not nearly as obvious.

A group called the ACAM Broadband Coalition filed a [petition](#) with the FCC in October 2020 asking to extend ACAM I and II in exchange for a commitment to deploy 100/25 Mbps to a certain number of locations. There would be no budget impact (same level of annual support would just be extended for 6 years), and the 100/25 obligations would in essence be reallocated from current 4/1, 10/1, and 25/3 obligations. The FCC has yet to act on the petition.

The rural broadband industry concern is that without a viable successor, the FCC will default to its favorite method of distributing support—competitive auctions. Or, Congress could take up the issue and make high-cost support programs subject to annual appropriations—a

situation the rural industry has been trying to avoid for years.

Recent congressional actions have raised another concern—the FCC, with its focus on deployment and the high cost of *continuing* operations—seems to be getting shut out of new broadband deployment programs. While the FCC seems to be Congress' main go-to for affordability and adoption activities ([EBB program](#) and, to a lesser extent, the [ECF](#)), NTIA seems to be the new favorite administrator for deployment efforts ([Tribal Broadband Connectivity](#), [Broadband Infrastructure Plan](#), and the Invest in America Act's \$42.5B program for the states), which consist mostly of one-time grants to address infrastructure needs.

Some of the new focus is the FCC's [fault](#) due to failings with the RDOF auction. However, the push for NTIA to be in control, to the extent they opened two new broadband offices, could also be the White House's way to exert more control since NTIA is part of the Department of Commerce, and not an independent agency like the FCC. Either way, the focus is on grants for infrastructure and adoption, and not necessarily on going operations, maintenance, and upgrading of current broadband networks (i.e., the sustainability function of the FCC-administered high cost programs).

The rural associations are working on a way to address this problem, and hopefully the FCC will be receptive to the plan and will take the opportunity to protect its important universal service functions.

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 effective 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



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