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# Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE  
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

## Regulatory Headlines

### Open Internet Rules Repealed

As expected, the FCC, in a 3-2 party line vote, repealed the Open Internet rules it adopted in 2015. The decision generated plenty of comment on both sides of the issue, and rumblings of court challenges have already begun. Assuming the final order, which has not been released as of this writing, is substantially similar to the draft order (see 12-1-17 *Insider*), we don't expect much impact on small ISPs apart from some minor transparency disclosure changes even if it manages to withstand court proceedings.

This is a good basic description of yesterday's actions, while this piece takes a little more of a tongue-in cheek approach.

The individual commissioner statements (Pai, O'Reilly, Carr, Clyburn, Rosenworcel) are available and make for some good reading, and also point to why this issue has engen-

dered such attention in the general press.

### Colorado ETC to Return USF

The FCC has rejected a challenge by Colorado eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) Blanca Telephone Company (Blanca) to the FCC Office of the Managing Director's (OMD) 2016 determination that Blanca must repay over \$6,748,280 in high-cost universal service fund (USF) overpayments from 2005 to 2010.

### Copper Retirement Plans Face Repeal

A four-part nongovernment organization (NGO) coalition has filed an appeal against the FCC's decision in November to remove some of the obligations for operators to notify customers when they stop servicing copper lines.

### FCC to Propose RHC Program Changes

The FCC is considering changes to the FCC Rural Health Care (RHC) program, which covers some of the costs of broadband service for rural health care providers.



## Market Watch

[Rural Telecom Consolidation in PA](#)

[Global Internet Speeds Increase](#)

[Retransmission Negotiations = Bullying](#)

[Frontier's Infrastructure Surcharge](#)



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Questions? Comments?  
Contact Chris Barron

[cbarron@alexicon.net](mailto:cbarron@alexicon.net)

# Technology Trends

*New and notable technology and services*

## YouTube TV Hits 34 New Markets

The unbundling of the cable media empire is well underway, as players like Netflix grow and others like Hulu and YouTube offer live TV service. YouTube TV, in particular, is executing an aggressive rollout, just yesterday making the service available to another 34 markets. That brings us to a total of 83 U.S. markets in which YouTube TV is currently available.

## Smart Speakers are a Gateway

Amazon and Google are making a hard push for smart speaker sales this holiday season. Both slashed prices before Cyber Monday, with Amazon cutting the price of its entry-level Echo Dot all the way down to \$29.99. The two companies' hardware innovation and price cutting have been paying off. According to a recent comScore report, the portion of US households that own a smart speaker rose to

11% in October from 8.1% in June.

## The Need to Step Up on Cybersecurity

Another year; another record-breaking year of cyber attacks. While corporations and governments are finally coming to terms with the infinite threat posed by black hat hackers, it may be years before online data is anywhere near secure.

## New Spider Ransomware

A new form of ransomware has emerged and is being distributed through malicious Office documents, infecting victims with file-encrypting malware. Uncovered by researchers at Netskope, the 'Spider Virus' ransomware campaign was first detected on December 10 and is ongoing.

## Broadband Works over String

Techies at UK ISP Andrews & Arnold have demonstrated that ADSL broadband can work over a wet string. An inquisitive engineer at the company this week decided to test whether wet string could work in place of twisted-pair copper for an ADSL connection.



## IN FOCUS:

### **FCC Actions (Other than Net Neutrality)**

While the FCC's action to overturn Open Internet rules took most of the oxygen at the open meeting yesterday, a few other items of note were addressed.

**Rural Health Care.** The Commission adopted an Order and NPRM (not yet available) relating to the Rural Health Care universal service program. The Order tells USAC to carry forward funding to meet the remaining FY 2017 obligations. The NPRM requests input on the RHC program's \$400m annual cap, evaluating "outlier" requests, and ensuring sufficient funding for rural and Tribal healthcare providers.

**Blue Alerts.** In an item that generated a bit of drama, mostly due to the subject matter, the Commission adopted a new "Blue Alert" code to be added to the national emergency alert system. Blue Alerts would be used, on a voluntary basis, to alert the public of threats to law enforcement. ([Report and Order](#))

**MVPD Subscriber Notification.** The FCC adopted an NPRM that, according to the News Release, "explores ways to enable multi-channel video programming distributors, such as cable and satellite providers, to communicate with their subscribers in more efficient and less costly ways." ([NPRM](#))

**Twilight Towers Public Notice.** According to the News Release, "Twilight Towers, which were constructed between March 16,

2001 and March 7, 2005, either were built without undergoing the historic preservation review required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, or lack documentation that such review was conducted. As a result, these towers are not eligible for collocations in the same way as towers that have documented Section 106 review and clearance or towers that were exempted under the pre-2001 standard. The Public Notice requests input on whether to formally request that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation adopt a document called a Program Comment that would allow collocations on Twilight Towers without historic preservation review so long as certain conditions are met." Commissioner [Rosenworcel](#) also called for a review of the FCC's Tribal Policy Statement originally adopted in 2000. ([Public Notice](#))

**National Ownership Cap.** This item has generated controversy due to its direct relationship to the proposed acquisition of Tribune Media by Sinclair. According to the News Release, the NPRM initiates a "comprehensive review of the national television audience reach cap, including the so-called UHF discount used by broadcasters to determine compliance with the cap. The national cap limits entities from owning or controlling television stations that, together, reach more than 39 percent of the television households in the country."



## Alexicon at Work

### **Alexicon Offices Closed**

Alexicon's offices will be closed on Friday, December 22 and Monday December 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday. We wish all a happy and safe holiday season!



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Contact Chris Barron  
[cbarron@alexicon.net](mailto:cbarron@alexicon.net)