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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[FCC to Address Huawei Equipment](#)

On Monday, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai announced his plans to release a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would bar the use of money from the FCC’s Universal Service Fund (USF) to purchase equipment or services from companies that pose a national security threat to United States communications networks or the communications supply chain. Chairman Pai will call a vote on this proposal at the Commission’s April 17th open meeting.

[RUS Takes New Approach](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service has begun accepting RUS broadband loan applications for fiscal year 2018. For years, the program has provided low-interest loans for broadband network construction and is currently operating based on parameters established in the 2014 Farm Bill. There are some changes to the RUS broadband loan application process effective immediately, however.

[FCC Approves SpaceX Broadband](#)

The top U.S. telecommunications regulator on Thursday gave formal approval to a plan by Elon Musk’s SpaceX to build a global broadband network using satellites.

[Dems Slam Pai Over Lifeline Limits](#)

A group of Democratic senators slammed the head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Thursday over his proposal to cut down on a program that helps make broadband and phone service more affordable for low-income households.

[Bill Includes \\$600M for Rural Broadband](#)

Rural broadband got a bit of love from the government as Congress is earmarking \$600 million for rural broadband as part of its \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill. These funds will get delivered to service providers and other enablers of rural broadband through the USDA’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS). The omnibus spending bill, which is aimed at funding the government through the end of September, would increase spending...



Market Watch

[Consumers Subscribe to OTT Through Providers](#)

[Comcast Invests \\$1.7M in PA Ethernet](#)

[Consumers Will Pay More for Better Experience](#)

[Small Operators Getting 5G Ready](#)



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Questions? Comments?
Contact Chris Barron

cbarron@alexicon.net

Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

FirstNet Goes Live

AT&T said FirstNet has gone live, timed to the one-year anniversary of the telco securing the contract for the public-private interactive broadband emergency communications network funded with FCC auction proceeds. The telco said it has delivered the core network -- tabbed the "brain and nervous system" -- of the network to the First Responder Network Authority and first responders can start to move to the core net under a "controlled" rollout by AT&T.

Cisco Disaggregates Operating System

Cisco Systems pushed software disaggregation efforts deeper into its Internetworking Operating System (IOS XR) platform. This includes greater hardware support -- with a caveat -- and more open APIs. The IOS XR platform is a modular and distributed network operating system targeted at service provider networks.

AT&T—Market Will Pick SD-WAN Winners

Having already launched SD-WAN in over 150 countries, AT&T certainly has the experience with the service, but admits that vendor solutions are far from equal. The service provider today will support various platforms in its SD-WAN offering, including vendor partners VeloCloud. Overall, the service provider has rolled out SD-WAN to over 100,000 users and is growing.

IT As You Know It is Dead

IT leaders are navigating an unfamiliar world. To really understand the truth of this, let's rewind to the middle of the 20th century. IT as a discrete corporate function was born in the 1950s, when companies realized they needed to protect their new investment in some very large, very expensive, and very complicated machinery: Computers. As such, the IT department's entire job was to protect those machines and ensure they were used as efficiently

Hackers Aim to Destroy Trust

While cyber-attacks focusing on stealing email or other data are still very much part of the threat landscape, some of the most advanced hacking operations are focusing on grander goals. Some of these groups -- almost all nation-state backed -- are turning their attention to critical infrastructure including utilities firms and power plants, while others are attempting to manipulate...



IN FOCUS:

**Truth
In
Billing**

The FCC recently released a [Declaratory Ruling](#) responding to eight questions raised as a result of a 2010 (that's not a typo) court decision relating to Truth-in-Billing (TiB) rules. The court case, *Gregory Manasher and Frida Sirota v. NECC Telecom*, raised issues about Section 201(b) of the Telecommunications Act and how it relates to section 64.2401(b) of the FCC's TiB rules. The plaintiffs argued that certain of NECC's billing practices violated both 64.2401(b) and 201(b) of the Act, while NECA disagreed and stated a violation of the FCC's rules in 64.2401(b) does not necessarily lead to a violation of the law (201(b)). The Court ruled that the FCC had not yet taken up this issue, and referred the questions to the Commission.

Section 201(b) of the Act is the "just and reasonable" statute and requires that "all charges, practices, classifications, and regulations for and in connection with such communication service, shall be just and reasonable..." The FCC's TiB rules are partly based on this statute, with 64.2401(b) requiring that charges on telephone bills must be accompanied by a "brief, clear, non-misleading, plain language description."

The eight questions asked and answered relate to, for the most part, the clarity of certain billing practices. For example, the FCC finds "that a charge labeled 'recurring fee' without additional description or clarifying context violates the rules and Section 201(b), even if non-misleading."

In the Declaratory Ruling, the FCC appears to answer the overarching question that, yes, a violation of TiB rules is also a violation of Section 201(b).

As a reminder, the Commissions TiB rules ([LINK](#)) contain requirements applicable to all telecommunications carriers relating to:

- Bill Organization
- Description of Billed Charges
- Deniable and Non-Deniable Charges
- Clear and conspicuous disclosure of inquiry contacts
- Blocking of third party charges

Given the Commission's recent activity, it may be a good idea for all telecommunications carriers to review the TiB rules to ensure continued compliance.

Some additional resources are as follows:

- * [FCC Guide to Understanding Your Telephone Bill](#)
- * [Truth-in-Billing First Report and Order \(1999\)](#)



Alexicon at Work

Alexicon consultants are busy working on end of March / early April deadlines, including quarterly HCLS updates for certain clients (e.g., 17-4), Form 508s (CAF BLS projections) and Form 499As (annual telecommunications reporting worksheet).



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Contact Chris Barron

cbarron@alexicon.net