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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Interactive CAF Map Released](#)

USAC released its interactive online map displaying the impact the Connect America Fund (CAF) program has had on in rural America. The CAF map shows where carriers that receive CAF support have deployed high-speed Internet service, based on information filed by the carriers.

[Lawmakers Worry About USF Cuts](#)

Lawmakers from both parties criticized the Federal Communications Commission over cuts to programs intended to boost rural broadband at a hearing on October 3.

[Rural Broadband Availability Overstated](#)

The FCC has vastly overestimated rural broadband availability, according to a new report from the Center for Rural Affairs. The commission has been relying on Form 477 data in gauging where broadband is available for purposes of the Connect America Fund and Universal Service Fund programs.

[FCC's Defense of Net Neutrality Repeal](#)

The Federal Communications Commission told a federal court on Thursday that it acted properly when it repealed the U.S. government's net neutrality rules in 2017, marking its first legal salvo in a campaign to battle 22 states and tech companies including Mozilla, Facebook and Google that contend the agency's move was illegal.

[Robocallers Sidestep New Rules](#)

The Federal Communications Commission should let phone companies get more aggressive in blocking robocalls, 35 state attorneys general told the commission yesterday.

[National Lifeline Verifier Full Launch](#)

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announced that, effective November 2, 2018, the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier) will undergo a hard launch in the six initial participating states—Colorado, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.



Market Watch

[Customer Service for Rural Wireless Carriers](#)

[Average Fixed Wireless Speeds: Report](#)

[AT&T Not Only Focused on mmWave for 5G](#)

[GTT Communications Acquires Access Point](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Crypto Currencies Need Monitoring

Crypto assets such as bitcoin do not pose a threat to financial stability but monitoring is needed along with possible action to protect consumers, the global Financial Stability Board said. While price increases in crypto assets have been larger than comparable historical asset bubbles, market capitalization remains small compared with other financial markets, the FSB said.

Manipulated Hardware at U.S. Company

A U.S. telecommunications company has reportedly discovered “manipulated” hardware from chip maker Super Micro. The revelation comes days after a report said that motherboards made by the company were modified to let Chinese hackers into the computer systems that installed the chips.

Blockchain Can Disrupt Media Industry

You can't go five minutes on the internet without coming across some news involving blockchain. Tech startups hoping to reach unicorn status append the term to their press releases hoping to gin up interest. Financial firms tout their entries into cryptocurrency. The applications for blockchain tech in media may not be quite as obvious as in other industries, but a growing number of startups and legacy conglomerates have been kicking the tires on the tech. For some of these startups, in particular, blockchain is simply the future of the business.

Managed Security Services

With security concerns continuing unabated, carriers stand to make a tidy profit in delivering managed security solutions to their customers. According to International Data Corporation's updated Worldwide Semiannual Security Spending Guide, managed security services is the largest...

Digital Transformation in 2019

Perhaps the biggest surprise of all about digital transformation isn't that large scale change is hard. It's safe to say that is now well established and widely known. It's how to do it repeatedly and sustainably that appears to be the key. We've also learned along the way that digital change is often more about the people involved and affected by it than it is about the technology.



IN FOCUS: *Industry Unity On USF Reform*

ITTA, NTCA, USTelecom, and WTA submitted a [letter](#) to the FCC outlining the associations' agreement on issues raised in the March 2018 RoR USF Budget NPRM. While the unity letter does not cover every issue contained in the NPRM, it does present a consensus on the major items.

On the overall budget, the associations agree that the current annual \$2 billion (plus \$200 million for additional ACAM support) should be increased to \$2.4 billion. This increase should mitigate or eliminate the current effects of the budget control mechanism (BCM) and assist with other program goals (such as a Tribal area support mechanism).

The associations also call for an inflation factor to be applied to the overall budget. This factor would be applied to the increased \$2.4 billion budget, and is similar to other FCC-operated mechanisms such as E-rate and Lifeline.

To the extent that the BCM's effects are not eliminated, the associations agree that there should be a minimum baseline of support for each carrier below which support cannot go. This level would be established at each carrier's unconstrained costs over the prior three years or its unconstrained support, whichever is lower.

Finally, the associations agree that no new ACAM support should be generated until the already-existing mechanisms are sufficiently

funded. In the NPRM, and in subsequent discussions with the Commissioners, the FCC's preference for ACAM-based support was clear—a second, broad offer of ACAM support was contemplated, even for carriers that would see increased support.

This two-page letter is the result of weeks of negotiations between the associations, with last-minute talks necessary to get all four to sign. Given the issues being addressed, it was vital for the associations to demonstrate some sort of consensus on the issues, and this unity letter should go a long way to favorably influencing the FCC's order that has been promised by the end of the year.

Preliminary word from the FCC is that the \$2.4 billion budget is acceptable to Commissioners Carr and Rosenworcel, while O'Rielly has thus far been non-committal. The wild card is Chairman Pai's office and the possibility of an entirely different approach.



Alexicon at Work

NECA Expo, November 4-7 in New Orleans

Alexicon's Zach Cochran will give a presentation on broadband mapping and federal broadband deployment policy. This presentation is intended to be a satirical (but not insulting) look at broadband mapping. It will outline the use, importance, complications and problems surrounding broadband mapping and Form 477. It will also discuss some solutions to the problems. This is timely due to the recent RUS NOI, GAO report, and FCC Form 477 proceeding.

Conferences and Meetings

Craig Baumgartner and Dion Nero will attend the Mid America Telecommunications Seminar and Showcase (MATSS) in Kansas City, MO on October 15-17.



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