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April 20, 2021

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**Key GOP lawmaker**  
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House Republicans have fired a shot across the net neutrality regulation bow before that ship has sailed.

According to a [copy of a letter](#) to FCC acting chair Jessica Rosenworcel provided to *Multichannel News*, Energy & Commerce Committee ranking

[as Pa. considers voting changes](#)

*The Hill*  
[Hawley introduces legislation targeting Amazon, Google antitrust concerns](#)

*TVLine*  
['This Is a Save the Company Moment': How TV Schedulers Scrambled Amid the Pandemic to Salvage This Season](#)

*Fox Business*  
[Apple reinstates Parler App after review](#)

*New York Times*  
[Facebook, preparing for Chauvin verdict, to limit posts that might incite violence.](#)

*Philadelphia Inquirer*  
[Op-ed: Telemedicine doesn't need to fade away after the pandemic](#)

*Harrisburg Patriot-News*  
[After motorcycle crash, Pa. Sen. Mike Regan says his riding days are behind him](#)

*Philadelphia Inquirer*  
[U.S. Supreme Court dismisses the last challenge over Pennsylvania's 2020 election](#)

member Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) and Communications Subcommittee ranking member Bob Latta (R-Ohio), joined by the Republican E&C members, warned against imposing "stringent net neutrality regulations" that could result in subs "losing their internet offerings."

The FCC under Rosenworcel has already signaled a [possible different outcome](#) as it considers petitions to reconsider the deregulation of internet access under the previous administration. Citing the pandemic, they said broadband providers had responded by improving networks and offering free or reduced price services, adding "[W]e urge you not to impose stringent net neutrality regulations that may result in Americans losing their internet services."

The suggestion that internet regulation could cost customers service is a reference to what they say was California's "bungled" attempt to reregulate internet access after the Republican-led FCC--under chairman Ajit Pai--reclassified that access as a Title I information service not subject to common carrier regs and eliminated the rules against blocking, throttling and paid prioritization imposed by his Democratic predecessor.

"Almost immediately after California enforced this law, two Internet providers reportedly told the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that the law could force them to end [zero rating] arrangements with U.S. wireless carriers that enable veterans to access a free, mobile telehealth app called VA Video Connect," they wrote. Zero rating opponents Free Press countered that the claim was "premature, cynically opportunistic" and an attempt to "scare the Biden FCC from reinstating the federal rules and reclassifying broadband as a telecommunications service — which common sense dictates it is."

They called out Rosenworcel for applauding the Biden Justice Department's decision to pull the plug on the Trump Administration's lawsuit against the California law, a law Rosenworcel said had filled the void created by the Pai FCC's net neutrality deregulation, which Rosenworcel had strongly opposed. "There was no void to fill, as oversight by the Federal Trade Commission, DOJ, and state attorneys general ensured that ISPs would fulfill their promises not to block or throttle traffic or otherwise engage in anticompetitive conduct."

While Rodgers and Latta said they agree that blocking, throttling and anticompetitive behavior should be prevented, they said that can happen with burdensome overregulation, both from the FCC and from states.

Whoever becomes the FCC chair, Rosenworcel or another Biden pick, they are expected to restore net neutrality rules. Republicans are OK with that, but not with doing so by reclassifying internet access as a Title II service subject to mandatory access and potentially rate regulation. But in any case, no action by the FCC can happen until a third Democrat is nominated and confirmed. At the moment it is a political tie, 2-2, and neither Republican is going to be voting to reclassify ISPs as common carriers.

The Biden Administration's COVID-19-related broadband subsidy programs have signaled that the definition of broadband availability should include competition and price, which has Republicans fearing that Title II could be used to justify regulating price or opening networks to competitors. — *NextTV*

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Netflix Inc.'s subscriptions soared last year as the Covid-19 pandemic curtailed big parts of economies globally. The company must now contend with people looking to leave the house more and a growing number of competitors.

Netflix's subscriber base jumped by roughly 37 million on a net basis during 2020 to [reach 204 million by the end of December](#), a performance that further cemented its powerful status in the content-streaming market. Executives at the Los Gatos, Calif., company have said the pandemic pulled forward demand because alternative entertainment options dried up. "There's a boost in engagement that you get when people are in a lockdown situation," Netflix operations chief Gregory Peters said at an investor event last month.

Many consumers who get vaccinated are venturing out of their homes more and shifting spending despite the lingering threat posed by coronavirus. [Airlines are looking for a resurgence](#) in summer travel. [Movie theaters](#) and other venues have reopened in New York, Los Angeles and

elsewhere. [Restaurants and hotels](#), both hard hit by pandemic-related closures and restrictions, have stepped up hiring.

For the first quarter, Netflix has said it expects to add six million new subscribers, less than half of the 15.8 million it gained for the year-earlier period, when the spread of the coronavirus was first intensifying. The company also forecast \$1.36 billion in net income on \$7.13 billion in revenue for the period. Netflix made a number of changes last year amid the surge in new subscribers. The [company said in July](#) that it promoted Ted Sarandos to co-chief executive, a position he holds along with Reed Hastings. In October, Netflix [boosted the monthly price](#) of its most popular streaming plan by \$1 to \$13.99 a month, and its premium offering by \$2 to \$17.99 a month.

Netflix increased the prices as other media companies have expanded their own streaming platforms, often working to draw in users with lower monthly rates. Newer services include Walt Disney Co.'s Disney+, Apple Inc.'s Apple TV+ and AT&T Inc.'s HBO Max. Discovery Inc. launched Discovery+ in the U.S. in January. ViacomCBS Inc. debuted the Paramount+ service in the domestic market last month. [Many competing streaming services](#) "are priced at a discount to Netflix," analysts at Raymond James said in flagging the company's increase as a potential risk for subscriber retention.

In January, Netflix said it had been expecting more competition, and that was why the company had been building up its portfolio of original shows that appeal to a broad set of consumers world-wide. The company has been working to secure rights to content from other studios too, [recently signing a deal](#) with Sony Pictures Entertainment for domestic streaming rights to its theatrical movies.

Some analysts have said Netflix's command on consumers has slipped recently and forecast slower growth ahead. The company controlled half of demand for original content globally in the first quarter, down from 54% for all of last year, according to Parrot Analytics, which measures streaming.

EMarketer expects the average amount of time consumers in the U.S. will spend each day using Netflix will rise 3% this year over 2020. Between last year and 2019, consumer usage jumped 20% to more than 31 minutes a day, according to the firm. Some Netflix subscribers may notice other changes to their service. Last month, the company [began experimenting with greater password enforcement](#) to prevent users from sharing their accounts. – **Wall Street Journal**

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Pennsylvania's Legislative Reapportionment Commission needs a chairman, the fifth member who could break ties on proposals for redrawing state legislative districts.

The four lawmakers on the committee have an opportunity to show real commitment to transparency and fairness by selecting someone from the group that has lobbied for several years against gerrymandering — Fair Districts PA.

The four caucus leaders from the state House and Senate are accepting applications from members of the public to serve on the commission. They only have until the end of the month to make an appointment before the decision gets handed off to the state Supreme Court, a move that has happened frequently over the past five decades because the four lawmakers couldn't agree on a pick.

Selecting a chairman from the group that had actively campaigned for a citizens commission to redraw district lines would send a powerful message that lawmakers have heard the demands of the public to end gerrymandering and will work with someone committed to fairness in creating new districts. Fair Districts PA volunteers had lobbied state lawmakers for a constitutional amendment that would require district lines be determined by an 11-member

citizens commission rather than by the legislators. The group's efforts appeared to have paid off with a proposal in 2018 that seemed headed for passage, only to be torpedoed at the last minute by state Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Cranberry, who chaired the House State Government Committee.

Fair Districts has since turned its efforts to campaigning for openness in the state's redistricting efforts, including calls for livestreamed public hearings, a website for data and public comment, and the opportunity for members of the public to submit their own maps that would be available for review. All are suggestions that should be included in this year's process.

If the four caucus leaders won't consider someone from an anti-gerrymandering group, they should at least commit to a proposal from state Sen. David Argall, R-West Chester, that would limit who can serve as chairman. Mr. Argall's bill, which passed unanimously in a Senate committee in March, would prohibit a person from holding the position if the person or his or her spouse was a registered lobbyist or political candidate in the past five years, or if the person worked for a political campaign of a public official in the past five years.

Those are reasonable restrictions that would help remove some of the politicking from the process. The Senate and House have little time to vote on the measure before the April 30 deadline for selecting a chairman. Commission members should do the right thing without a law to compel them. Then the law should be passed to codify these reasonable restrictions for the future.

Ultimately, Pennsylvania needs districts that are created in a fair and reasonable manner, rather than with the intent of reassuring re-election for the current officeholder. Putting an outsider with a commitment to fairness on the commission would go a long way toward restoring some sense of integrity in the once-in-a-decade process. – ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*** editorial



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