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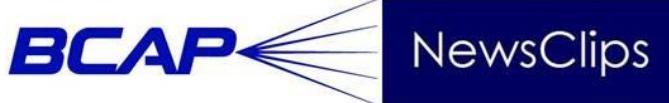
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June 18, 2021

**Ars Technica**  
Ohio Republicans close to imposing near-total ban on municipal broadband

**CNN**  
New Nielsen data shows that cable TV reigns supreme, but streaming is gaining fast

**Reuters**  
Google searches for new measure of skin tones to curb bias in products

**Washington Post**  
Will Lina Khan bring a reckoning to Silicon Valley?

President Biden's decision to name the progressive antitrust crusader Lina Khan to lead the Federal Trade Commission is a stark display of how far Silicon Valley has fallen out of favor in the nation's capital. In Congress, Democrats and some Republicans are working to rein in the largest tech companies with proposals aimed at curbing their market power. Lawmakers are cheering antitrust probes by the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission that could force these companies to shed acquisitions that were rubber-stamped by the government.

In the White House, Mr. Biden has shunned job applicants with ties to large technology companies. His decision to appoint Ms. Khan as FTC chairwoman Wednesday made one thing clear: There is to be no sequel to the tech industry's glory days during Barack Obama's eight years in the White House. "In the last four or five years, the pendulum has swung in an overly dramatic fashion from 'tech can do no wrong' to 'tech can do no right,'" said Adam Kovacevich, who spent 12 years as one of Google's top lobbyists. He now leads a new tech group called Chamber of Progress aimed at wooing back Democrats.

Tech industry lobbyists are challenged by the new reality. Facebook Inc.'s Washington roster until recently starred one of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's most trusted former aides, Catlin O'Neill, the granddaughter of former speaker Tip O'Neill. Ms. O'Neill worked as Mrs.

[She'll face major challenges.](#)

[Pennlive Family of former Pa. Gov. Tom Ridge remains 'hopeful for a full recovery'](#)

[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 'How they would rejoice': Pittsburgh community, politicians react to Juneteenth becoming a national holiday](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial: With \\$3 billion surplus, Harrisburg should cut the word 'scarcity' from the vocabulary](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer Democrats are waiting for Conor Lamb as Pennsylvania's 2022 Senate race takes shape](#)

Pelosi's chief of staff before her move to Facebook. In 2019, Mrs. Pelosi became so enraged by the social media company's [refusal to remove a doctored video](#) of her that she banned the entire Facebook team from her office. Ms. O'Neill left Facebook earlier this year. Facebook didn't respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Biden's former communications director Jay Carney oversees the Washington policy office of Amazon.com Inc. Mr. Carney's Twitter account features a snapshot of the two men smiling broadly. That shared history doesn't appear to be helping: Mr. Biden recently said it was "just wrong" that the company pays little in federal taxes. For years, Amazon and Facebook—along with Apple Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google—were some of the most influential companies in Washington. They initially found a foothold there during Mr. Obama's administration by showing politicians how to use the internet to raise money and spread their messages. While he ran Google, Eric Schmidt helped Mr. Obama's first presidential campaign [develop tools to target supporters](#). Mr. Schmidt joined the campaign's victory party in Chicago and sat on several of the new administration's commissions.

FTC staffers concluded in 2012 that Google [broke antitrust laws](#), and called on the five-member commission to file suit against it for illegally stifling competition. After a flurry of conversations with senior officials in the Obama-Biden administration, the commission's politically appointed Democratic leaders voted with Republicans to end its investigation and settle the matter. As his second term drew to a close, Mr. Obama feted Silicon Valley at a White House festival dubbed "South by South Lawn." The elite crowd snapped Instagram selfies with Lego people sculptures, donned Google's virtual reality glasses and nodded approvingly as Mr. Obama and actor Leonardo DiCaprio discussed the dangers of climate change. Some attendees likened the event to a job fair for departing administration aides.

Many became tech lobbyists. More than 80% of the 334 people registered to lobby for Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Google last year previously worked on Capitol Hill or in the White House, according to the nonpartisan research group Center for Responsive Politics. But Democrats' relationship with the tech companies soured after the 2016 election of Mr. Trump. To many Democrats, the companies now looked like adversaries.

Facebook acknowledged Russian operatives posted negative material about Democrats on its platform. A data firm tied to Mr. Trump's campaign, Cambridge Analytica, [siphoned Facebook user data](#). Many Democrats viewed those and other Facebook missteps as having contributed to Mr. Trump's win. Republicans developed their own issues with the companies. Top Facebook officials with ties to Republicans met in June 2018 with then-House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) and Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel to discuss GOP accusations that Facebook squelches conservative voices.

At that meeting, Facebook officials called the claims baseless and pointed out that many of its most-viewed posts are by prominent conservatives. But the meeting did nothing to tamp down the complaints, and the social media company decided not to take its pushback public, for fear of fanning the flames. "Everyone knew Trump's content was performing very well on social media. The companies could have pushed back harder on the bias charges, either with our own data or challenging

him to produce his own,” said Nu Wexler, who has worked on the communications teams at Twitter, Facebook and Google. “But we ducked the fight and it spun out of control.”

Google also hit turbulence in Washington soon after Mr. Trump’s election. Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D., Conn.) and Rob Portman (R., Ohio) teamed up in 2017 [to curb online sex trafficking](#). At first, Google refused to discuss the bill with the senators. “They stiff-armed us,” recalled Mr. Blumenthal. When the senators continued to press the bill, Google sent a pair of lobbyists to tell Mr. Blumenthal’s staffers that the legislation would hurt the senator politically, Mr. Blumenthal said.

During the meeting in Mr. Blumenthal’s office on Capitol Hill, two Google lobbyists told the staffers to deliver a warning: “You will destroy the internet as we know it—and it will be on you,” Mr. Blumenthal said. Google didn’t respond to a request for comment. “I am laughing now, but essentially I was all the more determined to do the bill—it made me all the angrier frankly,” Mr. Blumenthal said. The bill passed by a wide margin.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D., Minn.), who leads a Senate panel with jurisdiction over antitrust law, said she was similarly put off by the companies as she drafted legislation in 2017 requiring them to disclose more information about online political ads. “What I learned from them was just the arrogance of not even wanting to play by the same rules” as other handlers of political ads, such as radio stations and newspapers, she said. The tech companies later became more supportive of her bill, which hasn’t passed. This year, she [introduced legislation](#) that would make it easier for the government to break up tech firms, rebuffing requests by tech lobbyists to soften the measure.

As five House tech bills came together this month, lobbyists for the companies that would be most affected said they were frozen out of the process and that the lawmakers did everything they could to keep drafts of the proposals out of their hands. “The industry was very much treated as the enemy, and one to be isolated,” one lobbyist said. As a result, the bills are tougher on the industry than if lawmakers had sought their input to craft something that they could support. The clearest sign of the declining influence of tech companies in Washington is coming from the White House.

Mr. Biden’s former communications director is defending Amazon against attacks by liberals, including Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D., Mass.), who has repeatedly accused Amazon of lobbying to insert loopholes into the tax code to lower its tax bill. The company makes use of longstanding tax credits, such as for research and development. On April 5, when Ms. Warren wrote on Twitter that she is “tired of free-loading corporations,” Mr. Carney responded directly, tweeting: “Senator @ewarren, respectfully, the R&D Tax Credit has existed for 40 years, far longer than Amazon. Sen. Sanders voted for it 8 times. Then-Senator Biden voted for it 10 times. And in 2015, you yourself voted to make it permanent.” Ms. Warren ignored Mr. Carney, and Mr. Biden recently complained about Amazon’s taxes.

The president also has questioned the number of jobs the tech sector creates and has called for more regulations of the content of internet platforms. During his presidential campaign, a Trump campaign ad on Facebook and elsewhere falsely accused Mr. Biden of pressing Ukraine officials to fire the prosecutor investigating a company with ties to his

son, Hunter Biden. Mr. Biden's campaign asked Facebook to take down the ad, but the company refused. After Mr. Biden won, he said Facebook and other companies should be responsible for the content on their networks.

Lobbyists for the tech companies have sought to persuade Mr. Biden to install pro-tech advocates in administration positions, just like Mr. Obama. Instead, the president has named two prominent industry critics—Ms. Khan and Tim Wu—to key posts. Mr. Wu, who was appointed to the National Economic Council, recently published a book contending that large tech firms stifle innovation. Ms. Khan has been a leading antitech critic since publishing a 2017 paper calling for a new approach to antitrust enforcement to rein in tech companies. “This is not the same corporate crowd of last time,” said Barry Lynn, an advocate for breaking up tech firms and the director of the liberal Open Markets Institute. — **Wall Street Journal**

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The battle to shape public opinion over Pennsylvania Republicans' proposed election overhaul intensified Thursday, as Gov. Tom Wolf called it an attack on voting rights and GOP lawmakers crashed an event in the Philadelphia suburbs to demand he negotiate. Democrats have blasted the proposal as the latest effort by GOP-controlled legislatures across the country to appease former President Donald Trump and effectively codify his lies about a stolen election into law. “Make no mistake, leaders of the [state] House Republican caucus are being driven by fringe conspiracy theories, and that is no way to make good policy,” Wolf said during a morning appearance in Delaware County.

Republicans call the bill an important, top-to-bottom upgrade of an election code that dates to 1937, parts of which were revised in a major 2019 law that greatly expanded mail voting. They say it would modernize elections, improve accessibility, and make them more secure. State Rep. Seth Grove (R., York), chairman of the House State Government Committee and the bill's author, came with other GOP colleagues to Wolf's news conference in Media. He labeled the argument that “election reform is suppression” as Democrats’ own “Big Lie” — a play on how Democrats have branded Republicans’ false election claims. “If you can’t fight on policy, make stuff up,” Grove said on Twitter, typing out tweets from the back of the room in the Delaware County courthouse where Wolf was speaking.

The showdown came two days after Republicans in the state House advanced their mammoth election legislation over Democrats’ objections. It’s set to go to the full House for a vote next week, after which it will likely head to the Senate. Republicans do not have the votes to override an expected Wolf veto. The bill would impose stricter voter ID requirements, mandate signature verification of mail ballots, and establish six days of early in-person voting, with that provision not taking effect until 2025.

It proposes dozens of other major administrative changes, such as allowing counties to begin processing and counting mail ballots prior to Election Day, banning them from accepting private donations for election administration, restricting drop boxes, and changing deadlines for voter registration and requesting mail ballots. Appearing with Wolf, State Sen. Sharif Street (D., Philadelphia) called the bill “nothing more than attempts to rebrand Jim Crow.” State Sen. Tim Kearney (D., Delaware) invoked the late civil rights icon John Lewis.

A [poll released Thursday by Franklin & Marshall College](#) found a majority of registered voters approve of some of the most notable provisions in the GOP bill. About three-quarters, including 47% of Democrats, said they strongly or somewhat favor requiring all voters show a photo ID, the survey found. Strong majorities of voters in both parties, as well as independents, also approve of signature verification of mail ballots. House Republicans [introduced the bill last week](#) after holding [10 hearings about the state's election infrastructure and administration](#). Grove has expressed frustration over the Wolf administration's refusal to negotiate on election legislation.

After Wolf's news conference ended, Grove told reporters he decided to attend with the hope that lawmakers can compromise with the governor. "We're looking to have that conversation with him and his staff to find a middle ground forward," Grove said. "We have not had that yet." Grove said he had texted Wolf's chief of staff, who walked away from negotiations in April because Wolf considers any effort to tighten voter ID requirements a nonstarter. That led Grove to draft the legislation without input from Democrats. Since then, Grove has said neither he nor Republican legislative leaders have had any contact with Wolf's office about the bill.

In December, Grove helped organize a letter from Republican lawmakers urging Pennsylvania's congressional delegation to [reject the state's Electoral College votes for Joe Biden](#). The letter accused county and state elections officials, along with Wolf, of undermining state election law. Grove has since said he accepts Biden as the legitimate winner of Pennsylvania and that his focus was on administrative and legal issues — not the baseless claims of massive voter fraud advanced by many of his colleagues.

Wolf has said that he's willing to talk with Republicans, but that he won't consider proposals he says would make it harder to vote. He said on Thursday that he supports some ideas in the GOP bill, including [allowing counties to process mail ballots before Election Day](#), increasing pay for election workers, and providing funding for counties to buy electronic poll books. The bill includes "some good changes, but it also creates some new barriers" to voting, he said.

Numerous studies of years of American elections have found no evidence of significant voter fraud. It's hard to predict how the legislation might impact elections. [Research in multiple states has found](#) that photo ID requirements tend to disproportionately impact people of color. But that doesn't mean such mandates necessarily reduce turnout, as opponents mobilize against perceived attempts to restrict the vote.

Under current law, people must show proof of identification — such as a driver's license — to register to vote. And voters must show ID the first time they cast a ballot at a new polling place. The [GOP bill would require voters to show a government-issued ID](#) at the polls in every election. Other forms of identification such as college IDs would also be accepted, and the Pennsylvania Department of State would be required to provide a free ID to any voter who requests one. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

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Clout pop quiz: What's the most efficient way to foul up reform-minded legislation with potential for bipartisan support in Harrisburg? Make it apply only to Philadelphia!

State Rep. Martina White, who represents Northeast Philly and chairs the Republican City Committee, [introduced a bill in March](#) to give voters across the state the power to recall elected officials, from governors and auditor generals down to mayors and district attorneys. State Rep. Jared Solomon, a Democrat who also represents Northeast Philly, offered a similar bill in 2019 and was ready to push for it again this year.

White's bill landed this week in the House State Government Committee, where State Rep. Frank Ryan, a Republican from Lebanon County, amended it to apply only to Philadelphia. That amendment passed on party lines. Solomon wryly joked that Ryan was "moonlighting" as a Philly legislator while messing with a reform. "This is something we need to be attuned to everywhere, in every single nook and cranny of Pennsylvania," Solomon said.

State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta, a Democrat from North Philadelphia also on the committee, accused Republicans of picking politics over policy. "He took a bill that could have gotten bipartisan support and did what they always do, which is politicize it rather than legislating," Kenyatta said. Ryan says he wasn't trying to offend anyone and noted the legislation still has a lot of runway before takeoff. It would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution, so it must be passed in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approved by voters in a statewide referendum.

Philadelphia's Home Rule Charter [has a recall provision](#), but the state Supreme Court [ruled it unconstitutional](#) when it was used against Mayor Frank Rizzo in 1976. White, who is not on the committee, told Clout she wanted the bill to have bipartisan support and statewide impact. "But I still think it's good for the people of Philadelphia that they have the recall option," she said.

When some protesters last fall called for defunding the police, U.S. Rep. Scott Perry (R., Pa.) [signed a pledge](#) to support law enforcement, saying police have dangerous jobs, "often risking their lives protecting us," especially from "violence, looting and lawlessness." Yet when Congress moved this week to honor the officers who protected the York County Republican and everyone else at the Capitol during [the violence, looting, and lawlessness](#) of the Jan. 6 insurrection, he voted against it.

He was [one of just 21 "nays"](#) (all Republicans) while 406 House members (including 188 Republicans) [voted to award four Congressional Gold Medals](#): to the U.S. Capitol police, Washington's Metropolitan police, and for display at the Smithsonian and Capitol. Perry previously [amplified](#) former President Donald Trump's [lies about a stolen election](#), which fueled the riot as Perry and fellow Republicans tried to throw out their state's votes.

Perry now says he's "indebted and grateful daily for the bravery and dedication" of police and that "despite the disgraceful events that put their personal safety in jeopardy, these officers not only defended our Capitol and those who serve in it, but defended our Republic itself." So why vote against recognizing them?

Perry said [he voted for a similar bill](#) in March and supports honoring police, but that the new version "was a politically motivated narrative unbefitting the honor earned by these brave officers." His complaint: The display at the Capitol will include that narrative. But that's not spelled out

in the bill. Speaking of “politically motivated narratives,” Perry told Central Pennsylvania’s Fox 43 this week that there were 100,000 more votes than actual voters in Pennsylvania in November’s election. That conspiracy theory was debunked months ago. – **Chris Brennan’s** “Clout” column in *Philadelphia Daily News*



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