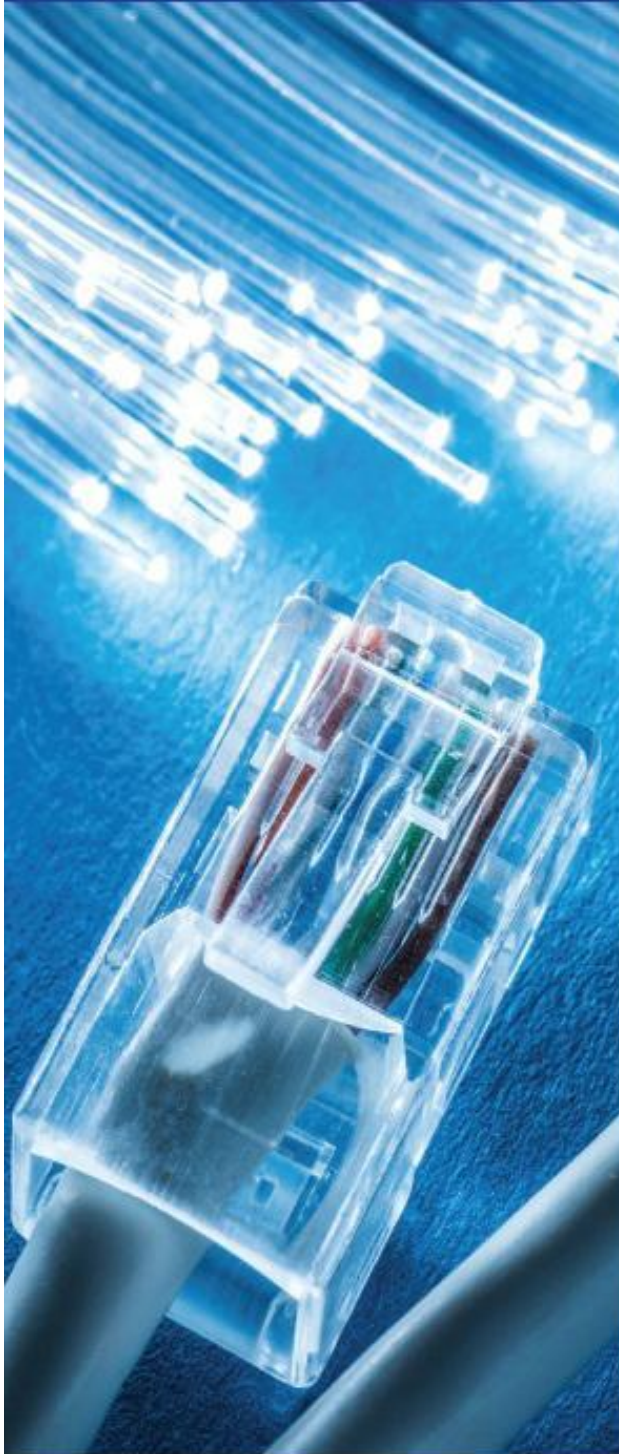


# PA Townships **Value Relationship** with Cable Industry



**T**he Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors salutes a longstanding working relationship with BCAP that has benefited millions of our commonwealth's citizens.

PSATS members have had successful partnerships with the commonwealth's cable companies for decades. The result has been a Pennsylvania-born technology that continues to provide entertainment, education, and communications services for generations of our state's citizens and businesses.

If there was ever a template for blending technology providers with local government, our 70-year-old working relationship with BCAP members is it.

PSATS looks forward to continuing and growing its partnership with broadband cable companies in the years ahead to deliver services to ALL Pennsylvanians!



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Congressional leaders and a media advocacy group are urging the Federal Communications Commission to examine how policy decisions and programs have disparately harmed Black Americans and other communities of color, according to a letter sent Tuesday to the acting FCC chair.

In the letter, first shared with The Associated Press, Democratic Reps. Jamaal Bowman of New York, Yvette Clarke of New York, and Brenda Lawrence of Michigan along with Media 2070 said the FCC should conduct an assessment to "address and redress" the harm the agency's policies and programs have caused Black and brown communities and identify the "affirmative steps the agency commits to taking to break down barriers to just media and telecommunication practices."

The FCC is an independent governmental agency that is responsible for regulating the nation's communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. In total, 25 members of Congress signed onto the letter, including Congresswomen Karen Bass of California, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

A lack of diversity and representation has long been a concern for media advocates and experts who argue that racism permeates the nation's media industry, partly because of historical exclusionary policies and regulations that have made it hard for Black Americans and others to control and shape news coverage and other forms of media in communities across the nation. Media 2070, an initiative created by the Black caucus of the nonpartisan organization Free Press, has called for media reparations for the Black community and the FCC letter is part of its efforts.

Earlier this month it delivered a petition to 3,000 newsrooms across the country, urging news outlets to "dismantle anti-Black racism in the media, trust Black journalists and care for Black communities." "Although many journalists and artists of color have used their talent to ensure critical stories about their communities are being told, our nation's big media companies nevertheless continue to stereotypically depict people of color as being a threat or a burden to society," the lawmakers wrote in their joint letter to Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel. "Historic federal policies are a primary reason why structural inequities exist in our nation's media and telecommunication systems today. FCC policies, license decisions and inaction have had the result of effectively excluding people of color from media ownership opportunities."

The lawmakers noted the nation's first radio and TV licenses were awarded by the Federal Radio Commission and then its successor, the FCC, during an era of Jim Crow segregation. "The (Trump administration's) efforts to consolidate the media marketplace limited ownership opportunities for people of color and women," the letter stated. President Joe Biden signed an executive order in January, directing executive agencies to assess how federal policies have exacted harm upon communities of color. Each agency was tasked with identifying potential barriers that underserved communities and individuals face in trying to access contracting opportunities and also

whether new policies, regulations or guidance documents may be necessary to advance equity.

The order also “strongly encouraged” independent agencies, which would include the FCC, to conduct an assessment. In a statement to the AP, an FCC spokesperson said Rosenworcel is “committed to ensuring that FCC policies are equitable, fair, and transparent.” Rosenworcel announced last week a plan to expand the work of the recently renamed Communications Equity and Diversity Council. The council’s mission will expand from its initial focus on the “media ecosystem to review more broadly critical diversity and equity issues across the tech sector.” “She believes that we must prioritize diversity and expand opportunities for communities that have for too long been overlooked and underserved,” the statement said. “While the FCC is an independent agency, it has been working diligently under her leadership to follow President Biden’s executive order. But more work remains to be done. We are committed to working with those who sent this letter to do so.”

People of color own and control just 6% of our nation’s full-power TV stations, 7% of commercial FM radio stations and 12% of commercial AM radio stations despite making up more than 40% of the U.S. population. As of 2017, Black Americans owned or controlled less than 1% of television stations, the group said, citing a 2020 FCC, Media Bureau, Industry Analysis Division report. Bowman said he supports a full racial equity audit of the FCC. “Dismantling structural racism is a priority of our office,” Bowman said. “Media controls our narrative and controls our consciousness and if people of color aren’t owning those spaces and are strategically and just purposely excluded from those spaces, we have to do something about that.”

A 2011 FCC report on the changing media landscape found that broadcast owners of color and advocates “largely attribute low minority broadcast ownership levels to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which relaxed the local broadcast ownership rules and led to increased consolidation in broadcast media.” The newspaper and radio industries have also faced rapid consolidation. The FCC report noted that several studies have concluded that mainstream media outlets don’t adequately cover Black Americans and other communities of color.

The famous Kerner Commission report, which was commissioned by President Lyndon B. Johnson and released in 1968, found that the majority-white owned media outlets failed to cover the 1967 uprisings in Detroit and elsewhere from the perspective of Black Americans in a nuanced and accurate manner.

“By and large, news organizations have failed to communicate to both their Black and white audiences a sense of the problems America faces and the sources of potential solutions. The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man’s world,” the 1968 Kerner Commission report stated. And more than 50 years later, media organizations across the nation continue to grapple with a lack of people of color in newsrooms and media ownership. Efforts have been made to democratize the nation’s media system. But some of those changes were eventually rolled back.

In 1978, the FCC created the minority tax-certificate program, which allowed broadcasters to receive a tax break if they sold their stations to people of color. But in 1995, the Republican-controlled Congress passed legislation that ended the program, which had increased broadcast



ownership by people of color from less than 1% to 3%. Mark Lloyd, a former associate general counsel and chief diversity officer at the FCC, said there have been efforts over the years to address diversity and the agency is required by Congress to review its "policies and determine whether or not those policies are in the public interest." "That's the law, and having Congress reassert that I think has some utility," Lloyd said. "I would also say that it is important for the Federal Communications Commission to focus its concerns on whether or not the public is getting the critical information that it needs."

Congresswoman Lawrence said she has had previous conversations with the FCC about representation and she said she's hopeful the agency will conduct an audit. "President Biden made that commitment that he is going to really strive to have racial equality, and that includes the FCC because we know some of the policies have been more roadblocks and barriers, instead of being inclusive," Lawrence said. Media 2070 leaders said the goal of the letter is to not only push the FCC to address its history and shift the public conversation but also outline tangible steps to repair harm, including fixing the ongoing consolidation of media and directing financial resources into Black-owned platforms.

The nation's demographics are changing and the "media system has to change if it is going to survive," said Collette Watson, co-creator of the Media 2070: Media Reparations consortium and the Free Press' vice president of cultural strategy. "It's not just a matter of being diverse or being inclusive, it's really about completely upending the structure that exists so that we can have something that looks more truthful to who we are and how we're going to exist together as a multiracial society," Watson said. "If we can't have a media system that tells the truth of Black lives, the truth of all, and one that is safe for Black people to exist in and have our stories told in, then we aren't going to have a media system. It will become obsolete." — **Associated Press**

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Schools and libraries can begin on Tuesday to apply for a piece of a nearly \$7.2 billion pot of federal money to purchase laptops and tablets, Wi-Fi hot spots, modems, routers and broadband connections for off-campus use by students, school staff and library patrons. The Emergency Connectivity Fund — created by the American Rescue Plan, the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package passed by congressional Democrats in March — aims to close the digital divide in education after a year that saw classrooms go virtual.

Administered by the Federal Communications Commission, the fund is accepting requests for funding for the next 45 days, through Aug. 13, to cover expenses during the 2021-22 school year. "Even before the coronavirus pandemic upended so much of day-to-day life, seven in ten teachers were assigning homework that required access to the internet," FCC acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said in a statement. "But data from this agency demonstrates that one in three households do not subscribe to broadband."

Ms. Rosenworcel said she has thought about the viral picture of two young girls sitting outside a Taco Bell to pick up the fast-food restaurant chain's Wi-Fi connection — a striking illustration of what she called the "homework gap" caused by the lack of internet access at home. The FCC cited an estimate by nonprofit Future Ready that as many as 16.9 million children don't have the level of broadband access they need for

remote learning. “It was heart-wrenching to see,” she said. “But they were not alone. Kids elsewhere during this pandemic sat in cars outside of libraries to catch a signal to go online for class.”

The emergency fund is similar to the FCC’s E-Rate program, which already helps schools and libraries secure broadband service and equipment and has been championed by U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Forest Hills. The E-Rate program, however, requires that schools use the money to fund connectivity in the classroom and not remote learning. Last year, [Congressional Democrats pressed Republicans](#) and the Trump administration’s FCC to change those rules, to no avail.

Last September, Mr. Doyle, a top member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee who chairs the congressional panel tasked with overseeing telecommunications, said the FCC had neglected the digital divide in education. While the FCC doled out grants for telehealth services, “they’ve basically been shrugging off this whole need to do anything on the education side,” Mr. Doyle said in an interview. “It’s very frustrating. And it’s not like we haven’t been pressing them. They just haven’t been responding.”

In February, Ms. Rosenworcel said the FCC would review the E-Rate program.

In the meantime, schools and libraries can learn more about how to apply for the grants at: [www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org/application-process](http://www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org/application-process). If there’s any money left over, the agency said it will allow institutions a chance to apply for reimbursement of connectivity equipment or services they’ve already purchased during the pandemic. — ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

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Pennsylvania lawmakers seem to have a penchant for proposing actions that cost time and money but produce — well, nothing. Consider the latest move by state Sen. David Argall, R-Schuylkill, who chairs the Senate State Government Committee. He is now backing an audit of last November’s presidential contest in the state, similar to the partisan review Republicans called for in Arizona.

What would such an audit produce? By Mr. Argall’s own admission, it wouldn’t change a thing. During a Spotlight PA Capitol Live event, the senator acknowledged that such an audit would have no bearing — as if it could — on the election results showing Joe Biden as the winner in Pennsylvania. “The results are the results,” Mr. Argall said. “The Electoral College has spoken. You know the president has been sworn in. I understand that’s a reality.”

So why yet another audit, which Mr. Argall could undertake because his committee has subpoena powers? It’s no coincidence that Mr. Argall’s call for an audit comes shortly after he and Senate President Pro Tempore Jake Corman, R-Centre, were admonished by former President Donald Trump for not moving forward with the election review. In a statement, the former president asked: “Are they stupid, corrupt or naive? What is going on?”

For the record, the state’s election results have been audited twice, and results have been verified by election officials from all 67 counties as well as state elections officials. Even Mr. Trump’s own attorney general, William Barr, said repeatedly that there was no evidence of widespread fraud in Pennsylvania’s election. Still, Mr. Argall maintains that another

audit could help identify problems in the state's election law and lead to changes. But the state House has already held 10 hearings and has proposed sweeping changes to voting in Pennsylvania, a proposal in its current form that is sure to be vetoed by Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf.

Republicans in the Legislature are no doubt experiencing a bit of buyer's remorse over the voting law changes they approved in 2019. At that time, they agreed to allow all voters across the state to use mail-in voting, rather than requiring voters to provide a reason for requesting an absentee ballot. In exchange, Mr. Wolf and Democratic leaders agreed to remove the straight-party voting option from the ballot. It was a compromise agreed to by both parties.

What no one saw coming was the coronavirus pandemic that resulted in millions choosing to use mail-in ballots. And the overwhelming number of those mailed ballots were from registered Democrats. The last thing the state needs is yet another audit of the 2020 election. County elections officials, the ones who shoulder the most responsibility for conducting fair elections, have made it clear what is needed — an earlier start on counting mail-in ballots, an earlier deadline to request mail ballots and more funding to cover the added costs.

If state leaders are really committed to improving the election process and making it better for all voters, they should concentrate on those areas rather than wasting more time on an audit of election results that have never really been in doubt. — ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorial**

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Sitting up with a slight smile on her face in her hospital bed, [Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward](#) posted a message and photo on Twitter Tuesday. "All done! Thank you so much for all of the kind messages and prayers," she wrote. Ward, 64, underwent surgery on Monday for a double mastectomy.

Responding to a well wish on Twitter from Lt. Gov. John Fetterman for a speedy recovery, she replied, "feeling great."

Ward disclosed in May on KDKA Newsradio during the Marty Griffin Show that she learned of her [breast cancer diagnosis](#) two weeks after her [historic election as Pennsylvania's first female majority leader](#). She said she was in state 1, which is an early stage. "I didn't want to be statewide news right after I won majority leader," she said during [that interview](#). "I thought I can't emotionally handle that. So here we are. We're doing fine."

Ward, a Republican from Westmoreland County, underwent four chemotherapy treatments that were completed in the spring. She said during that interview, she never missed a meeting and didn't experience any sickness from the treatments. In a video posted from a hospital bed prior to her surgery at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital in Pittsburgh, she stressed the importance of getting breast cancer screenings.

She said her "journey" started in November with a mammogram. She said she had been faithful about getting annual mammograms but last year's was a little late due to COVID-19 "but it wasn't late enough to matter." One of her three sons, Michael, said in that video his mother's journey has taught him a lot about breast cancer and the importance of screenings. "If you have women in your life, let them know that vigilance is important. Frequent doctor's visits. Asking for screenings with your mammograms as much as you can and as early as you can and as

frequent as you can," he said. "It helps be preventative and lessens the risk."

Ward said she was looking forward to getting the surgery part of the journey over but ended her video displaying the levity she is known to bring to conversations. "Remember how important it is, as Michael said, to get your screenings," Ward said in the video. "Get your 3D screenings every year. So OK everyone, I guess it's ta-ta to my tatas." -- **Pennlive**



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