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A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hampton Inn, Hazleton, located just west of Exit 145 (West Hazleton) of I-81, off PA 93 at Top of the Eighties Road. Room rate is $99.00, tax not included. Please call the Hampton Inn at 570-454-3449 to make your reservation and specify you are with the "Broadband Cable Group."

BCAP 60th Anniversary NewsClips

October 4, 2017

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Philadelphia Inquirer
Comcast Ventures-funded MealPal brings lunch to downtown Philly crowd for $6

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New York Times
All 3 Billion Yahoo Accounts Were Affected by 2013 Attack

Washington Post
Russians took a page from corporate America by using Facebook tool to ID and influence voters

Bloomberg
Facebook Fought for Years to Avoid Political Ad Disclosure Rules

The Somerset County Board of Commissioners approved a deal Tuesday with a telecommunications consulting agency that will oversee a federally funded expansion of the county's internet infrastructure. MCM Consulting Group, based in St. Mary's, Elk County, will be paid $175,000 to oversee the project, subject to county Solicitor Dan Rullo's review of the agreement.

The Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce awarded $569,204 to Somerset County in May to fund the extension of fiber-optic cables to what the agency described as "key countywide industrial areas," including Somerset Industrial Park, Laurel Highlands Business Park, Meyersdale Industrial Park and North Star Industrial Park. The county estimated that the project will create 42 jobs, retain 20 current jobs and generate $25 million in private investment, according to the development group. – ***Johnstown Tribune-Democrat***

Like every other 8-year-old whom I tutored at a local school, Omar didn't know anything — and didn't care much — about high-stakes disputes over net neutrality, free speech and privacy that have consumed much of the news coverage of the telecommunications industry in recent years. Yet the inability of Omar's parents to afford broadband internet access lies at the heart of a battle that will have a far greater impact on his future: the fight over street poles.

Public street poles may not look like much, but to wireless service providers, they're valuable real estate. Companies like Verizon want low-cost access to them to install equipment to handle the rapidly growing demand for mobile data. But poles are owned locally, and cities and counties aren't eager to give away access at below-market rates. Doing so would essentially subsidize an already wealthy industry — nationwide, as much as $2 billion a year, money that could otherwise go to expanding low-cost broadband access for people like Omar's family.

As a result, the industry is waging a war for those poles, at all levels. Big Telecom and its allies in the White House have

Philadelphia Inquirer
House Republicans in Harrisburg consider increasing hotel tax by 5 percent

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
How a gerrymandering case in Wisconsin could affect elections in Pennsylvania

quietly carried out a campaign to secure rapid and cheap access to those poles, at taxpayer expense. Here in California, state legislators recently advanced a bill introduced by Senator Ben Hueso that would allow wireless service providers to install their equipment on public street poles at below-market rates — and to do so nearly wherever and whenever they choose — all in the name of "streamlining" local permit approvals.

We've seen similar efforts in Texas, Florida, Washington and dozens of other states, where telecommunications industry lobbyists spent more than $24.5 million in campaign contributions last year, according to **the National Institute on Money in State Politics**. At the federal level, Trump administration appointees to the Federal Communications Commission have publicly cheered these proposals, while releasing their own draft regulations to carry out additional industry-friendly rules nationally.

What do our taxpayers get in return for this sweetheart deal? Wireless companies insist that these legislative proposals will reduce costs for consumers, and deliver better-quality cellular voice and data service. Yet, in truth, they do nothing to actually ensure that customers will benefit from a single dollar of the cost savings that the corporate telecoms will pocket.

Moreover, service improvements will benefit only those customers able to afford its service. Despite the windfall that wireless providers receive at taxpayer expense, these industry-backed proposals do not require, or even encourage, the companies to expand broadband access to underserved rural and low-income neighborhoods.

There's no provision in the California legislation, for example, for broader deployment for low-income neighborhoods. In San Jose alone, over 40 percent of low-income residents lack broadband access. While the industry will respond by pointing to its discounted internet service plans, they remain of such poor quality that students like Omar cannot download their teachers' video-recorded lesson plans, or a Khan Academy instruction on algebra, particularly when multiple family members are sharing the same account.

In essence, these wireless service providers seek all of the privileges of a regulated water or electric utility — taxpayer-subsidized use of public infrastructure, deployment in locations of their choosing, overrides of the local government's authority — but without the accompanying responsibility: to serve everyone. It gets worse. The push by industry and the Trump administration to override local authority to set lease rates will undermine many cities' efforts to expand digital access. That's because San Jose; Tacoma, Wash.; and many other progressive cities seek to use lease revenues from street poles to finance the expansion of low-cost broadband to poorer neighborhoods. Otherwise, the wealthy will receive better service, and the poor will remain shut out.

These proposed regulations also supplant local communities' authority with industry fiat to determine how to deploy telecommunications equipment over public streets, sidewalks and parks. Homeowners surprised by the sight of refrigerator-size equipment installed on poles outside of their windows will have no ability to seek redress from City Hall to change the location or to mitigate the aesthetic impact of these unsightly fixtures. And because signals from of these devices can disrupt the operations of others, they can preclude cities from installing public-serving devices — such as gunshot-spotters or traffic safety sensors — on their own street poles.

These are just a few of the reasons a growing number of local elected leaders have opposed the industry's efforts in state legislatures and at the F.C.C. Here in California, the mayors of six of our largest cities — Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, Long Beach and Santa Ana – have joined leaders of 150 other cities in opposing California's version of this industry-backed effort.

There is a better way. If the industry wants the same access to taxpayer-funded infrastructure that public utilities enjoy, it should bear the concomitant responsibility to make its services available to everyone in that jurisdiction. Alternatively, if Big Telecom doesn't want the responsibility of deploying broadband in low-income neighborhoods, then the states and the F.C.C. should continue to allow cities to charge market-rate fees and leases to generate municipal dollars needed to broaden access, as San Jose is doing in several low-income neighborhoods.

We should all embrace the opportunity of greater broadband deployment, at better speeds, with the latest technology. Yet how we deploy this technology — and whether families like Omar's' will benefit — matters. If we're going to provide the telecom industry with unfettered access to public property, then the public's interest must come first. – ***New York Times***

DISH subscribers have been unable to watch Erie's WICU, WSEE or WBEP since Saturday evening. That's when negotiations on a fees contract broke down between DISH and Lilly

Broadcasting, which owns and operates the Erie stations and others in Elmira, New York; Honolulu; Puerto Rico; and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The impasse comes six months after Lilly Broadcasting pulled its programming off DirecTV for 10 days before reaching a new contract with that satellite provider. There are differences between the two negotiations, said John Christianson, Lilly Broadcasting's chief operating officer. "This is not 100 percent about revenue," Christianson said Tuesday. "We are also in discussions about new technology, the ability to watch our stations on smartphones and other personal devices."

Satellite providers pay broadcast stations to rebroadcast their programming. DISH officials said in a news release that Lilly Broadcasting is demanding unreasonable rate increases and has refused the provider's offer to match rates paid by other pay-TV providers. DISH also criticized Lilly Broadcasting's decision to pull One Caribbean Television — a 24/7 news, weather and entertainment channel — from its schedule. The station is carried by cable and satellite providers in hurricane-devastated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Lilly is further blinding the citizens of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands at this time, showing an unbelievable lack of compassion," DISH spokesman Warren Schlichting said in the news release. "During this humanitarian crisis, it's critical for people to have access to more information, not less, whether one home or 10,000 can access these stations." Christianson said Lilly Broadcasting remains committed to its viewers in those areas, reporting and airing stories on President Donald Trump's visit to Puerto Rico and other aspects of the storms' aftermath. He added the station remains available to other satellite and cable providers.

Viewers who watch programming online through Sling TV, which is owned by DISH, are also affected by the impasse, Christianson said. DISH customers in northwestern Pennsylvania can still receive Lilly Broadcasting programming over the air by using a TV antenna. Some viewers have had difficulty receiving WSEE's signal at 35.1 since the station went digital in 2009. "We are hoping that installing a new transmission line (at WSEE's antenna tower in Summit Township) next spring will maybe get rid of some of the pockets in our coverage area where people have difficulty picking up the signal," Christianson said. Christianson also said viewers can access CBS All Access online free for one week to watch programming, or watch some NBC and CW programs online. – ***Erie Times-News***

Ted Sarandos, Netflix chief content officer, was obviously positioning the streaming giant as all "pros" at the Vanity Fair summit. *WSJ's Joe Flint reports*: Mr. Sarandos also took a not-so-subtle dig at John Landgraf, chief executive of FX Networks, who has been critical of Netflix's prodigious output and has warned we're in an era of peak TV, meaning there is too much content. "The notion of peak TV is a backwards idea," Mr. Sarandos said, implying that it's an analog assumption about how to make choices about programming. On that note, Mr. Sarandos reiterated that Netflix's content budget is likely to be $7 billion next year, up from $6 billion this year.

Disney CEO Robert Iger brought the drama during his session at the Vanity Fair event, the Journal's Ben Fritz and Joe Flint report. He covered everything from being involved in the decision not to discipline ESPN's Jemele Hill after she tweeted President Donald Trump was a "white supremacist"—citing empathy for the anger she was feeling at the time—to NFL players' kneeling protests and the need for dialogue around gun-control issues in the wake of Sunday's mass shooting in Las Vegas. The Disney chief, who in June quit a presidential business council when Mr. Trump decided the U.S. should leave the Paris climate change accord, dove further into politics than he has done publicly in the past. Indeed, there have long been rumors he might consider seeking political office after his planned retirement from Disney in 2019. Putting politics to one side (or perhaps not, considering the discourse these days on the platform), Mr. Iger revealed Disney had looked at buying Twitter last year to aid its video distribution but opted instead to buy a majority stake in Major League Baseball's video-streaming unit, BAMTech. – ***Wall Street Journal***

In Stamford's largest real estate announcement of the year, Charter Communications said Tuesday it would relocate its headquarters to the downtown Gateway Harbor Point complex — a move that would double the company's Connecticut contingent by adding 1,100 jobs.

The new headquarters at 406 Washington Blvd. would comprise a 500,000-square-foot, 15-story building, which is scheduled to be ready for employees in 2019. The company has hired Stamford-based developer Building and Land Technology to build the hub, with an option to expand the site into a two-building campus. The project is scheduled to break ground early next year, immediately following expected land-use approvals. "This new, state-of-the-art facility in downtown Stamford will provide Charter the necessary resources to facilitate its continued growth," Charter CEO and Chairman Tom Rutledge said in a statement.

Charter has been based in its current downtown location, at 400 Atlantic St., since it moved in 2012 from St. Louis. It employs about 1,100 in the state, according to state Department of Economic and Community Development data. Charter officials said they chose the Gateway site, where a parking garage currently stands, because of its proximity to the downtown Metro-North train station and Interstate 95. The new headquarters would become the first commercial facility with "direct access" to the station's platform, company officials said. They also cited the large floor plans envisioned for the building, which they said would make office design more flexible.

"We are thrilled to partner with Charter to develop their new headquarters here at Gateway Harbor Point," BLT Chairman Carl Kuehner said in a statement. "We look forward to working with their team to create a modern workplace and ecosystem to continue Charter's strong growth here in Stamford." Charter plans to make $100 million in capital expenditures in Connecticut during the next few years, company officials said in their announcement of the move. The company declined to comment on the expected cost of the new building.

The company has been considering a move for at least several months, with Hearst Connecticut Media learning in June from company sources that the firm was looking at sites in Stamford. "We are happy that they chose to stay in Stamford and add jobs and expand their workforce here," Stamford Mayor David Martin said in a statement. "This investment in our city is good news, and we applaud their vote of confidence in the city of Stamford." A message left Tuesday for The Landis Group, which owns and operates 400 Atlantic St., was not immediately returned. Charter was represented in the deal by the commercial real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield.

The company needs a new hub to support its growing operations. Last year, it acquired Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks for a total of about $65 billion. With the merger, Charter expanded its reach to about 50 million homes and businesses and became the second-largest cable company in the country, after Philadelphia-based Comcast. During the past five years, it has enlarged its footprint from one floor to eight levels in the approximately 500,000-square-foot building at 400 Atlantic St.

In total, Charter employs about 92,000 people, with plans to hire about 20,000 during the next four years and invest $25 billion in broadband infrastructure and technology. Based on earnings, Charter represents the largest public company headquartered in Fairfield County. With some $29 billion in revenues last year, it took the No. 96 position in this year's Fortune 500 rankings. Charter shares closed Tuesday at about $370, up about 1.5 percent from their closing price Monday.

To support the new headquarters, Charter is in line to receive from the state a direct loan of $10 million and up to $10 million in tax credits. Additional tax credits would be available if Charter reached certain hiring benchmarks. "Today is a great day for Connecticut," Gov. Dannel P. Malloy said in a statement. "Charter's announcement to create an additional 1,100 jobs shows that our strategic investments are continuing to spur economic growth and create good-paying jobs in the state. We look forward to the continued success of Charter Communications as they grow within the state."

Other companies with headquarters or major offices in Stamford that are receiving state aid through the First Five Plus program include Henkel, Synchrony Financial, NBC Sports Group, Deloitte, Navigators and Pitney Bowes. – ***Southern Community Newspapers***