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President Trump on Thursday instructed the federal government to speed up America's investment in high-speed wireless data networks by developing a national strategy to funnel unused airwaves to the private sector. The presidential memorandum calls on federal agencies to assess which chunks of wireless airwaves, or spectrum, federal officials will need in the coming years to fulfill their missions, with an eye toward sharing the rest with cellphone carriers, technology companies and other emerging industries.

The announcement escalates the Trump administration's rivalry with China, whose own telecommunications companies have been investing heavily in advanced wireless technology. And it comes as carriers such as AT&T and Verizon are racing to debut the first consumer versions of 5G — a successor to the 4G LTE that connects many smartphones to the Internet — promising download speeds faster than the broadband many Americans use at home. "The wireless industry contributes roughly \$475 billion to the U.S. economy each year and supports nearly 4.7 million American jobs," said Michael Kratsios, deputy U.S. chief technology officer. "The coming 5G networks will bring enormous benefits to our economy." Making more airwaves available to the private sector, he said, could bolster the sector and accelerate the rise of new products such as virtual reality and telemedicine, as well as give new capabilities to the nation's military.

The White House is expected to issue a report on such technologies and their need for wireless spectrum. The "national spectrum strategy"

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will be issued by next summer. The announcement comes a month after the Trump administration invited businesses and policymakers to the White House to discuss ways to accelerate the spread of 5G. Thursday's initiative puts further distance between Trump and a proposal by some of his national security staff, earlier this year, to build a government-run 5G network across the country. The idea was quickly buried **amid criticism** from the telecom industry, and even the Federal Communications Commission, as un-American.

Still, in some parts of Washington, what motivated the national security proposal remains: a fear that Chinese-built networking equipment, when integrated into a U.S. 5G system, could be covertly used against Americans as spying devices. In August, Trump **banned federal agencies** from using technology from two Chinese manufacturers, Huawei and ZTE. And **the FCC has considered** barring U.S. telecom carriers from using Chinese equipment in their networks, too.

In addition, policymakers worry that **China's plan to spend more than \$400 billion** by 2030 on building a 5G network could set the stage for a generation of Chinese dominance in apps, services and devices — much as Apple, Google and other U.S.-based companies took advantage of an early American lead in 4G mobile data technology.

Thursday's spectrum memorandum does not address China from a national security perspective, White House officials said. But in highlighting the role of private industry in the strategic plan, they sought to philosophically distance themselves from China's state-operated telecom businesses as it seeks to lock in a head start on new wireless technology. "This is the American way, and in a global race with the Chinese, we very much stand behind American entrepreneurs to get there first," said a White House official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration thinking.

This is not the first time White House officials have sought to repurpose federal airwaves. In 2010, President Barack Obama called for the U.S. government to free up 500 megahertz of public spectrum for commercial use; three years later, he signed **another memorandum** expanding that directive. But Trump's memo scraps Obama's initiatives and replaces them with his own. "While those served important purposes at the time, we're taking a forward look," said another White House official, citing changes in technology and speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's internal deliberations. The new direction will preserve Obama's focus on research and development of new spectrum-sharing technologies that allow for multiple users of the same airwaves, the official said. — **Washington Post**

More than a dozen U.S. cities are challenging federal regulators in court over a recent decision that could give telecom companies millions in financial and other breaks as they race to build a next-generation wireless network powered by 5G mobile data.

On Wednesday, officials from Los Angeles; Portland, Ore.; and Bellevue, Wash., among others, **asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit** to review the rule change by the Federal Communications Commission, which restricts cities' ability to charge for access to public utility poles. Under the FCC's new policy, telecom carriers seeking permits to install their network equipment on public infrastructure must have their requests reviewed more quickly by city officials. Cities are

also required to charge carriers no more than \$270 per year per cell site in access fees. Before the new policy, carriers could expect to pay \$500 per pole annually, on average, according to [an agency study](#).

The changes were mandated by the FCC as part of an effort to accelerate the spread of high-speed wireless infrastructure. Supporters say the technology — a successor to the 4G LTE available on many smartphones — can deliver download speeds faster than what many Americans receive on their home Internet connections. It is also expected to help usher in new products and services, such as self-driving cars and telemedicine. The FCC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A slew of cities opposed the FCC rule change before it was approved by all four FCC commissioners in a vote last month. Some city officials argued that the reduced fees could undercut public programs. By approving the measure, the FCC would be “severely hindering local governments’ ability to fulfill our public health and safety responsibilities during the construction and modification” of cell sites, wrote Brent Fedors, county administrator for Gloucester County, Va., in a letter to the agency ahead of the vote. Others, such as the city of San Jose, said the FCC decision interferes with local officials’ autonomy to strike their own construction agreements with telecom carriers. In June, San Jose settled on a \$500 million deal with AT&T and Verizon to build out a local network. The city is among those appealing the new FCC policy.

A handful of local governments around the nation’s capital are also planning to oppose the FCC in court. Montgomery County, which is considering changing its zoning regulations governing where cell towers may go, plans to join other local governments in the D.C. region in filing a separate appeal of the FCC order in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. That appeal has not been filed yet. “We plan to argue that the FCC has significantly overreached and is seeking to remove local control,” said Montgomery County Council President Hans Riemer (D-At Large).

The county now requires that cell towers be at least 300 feet from residential areas. However, the Montgomery council plans to vote Tuesday on a proposal to allow small-cell antennas and other equipment to be located closer to homes. Riemer said the county needs to respond to wireless companies that say small-cell equipment must be clustered closer together, mostly on utility poles and streetlights. They say that will provide better coverage than the traditionally much larger cell towers that the county’s 1990s-era zoning regulations were aimed at. The exact distance hasn’t been determined yet, but council members have proposed new setbacks ranging from 30 feet to 60 feet.

The county council also is considering when companies’ applications for small-cell facilities would have to go through a public hearing process, which takes more time and costs thousands of dollars. Riemer said he hopes the council can agree on new county regulations before the FCC order takes effect in January. “I think it would help make the case that local governments can be relied upon to make changes for wireless technology,” Riemer said. The D.C. Council recently began considering legislation that would govern where small-cell towers could be located in the city. – *Washington Post*

Charter Communications Inc said on Friday it added more internet subscribers than Wall Street analysts had projected for the third quarter, making up for a drop in video subscribers that was less severe than expected. The company added 266,000 residential internet customers in the third quarter, above the consensus estimate of 234,000, according to research firm FactSet. More and more subscribers are deserting pay TV bundles and switching to cheaper streaming services like Netflix and Amazon.com's Prime video. That has pushed companies including Charter and Comcast Corp to focus on their high-speed internet business as a strategy to survive in the rapidly changing media landscape.

Comcast beat Wall Street estimates for internet subscribers on Thursday by adding 363,000 subscribers during the quarter. Charter reported a loss of 66,000 residential video customers in the quarter, well below the 104,000 it lost last year. Analysts had forecast a loss of 85,000 video subscribers. Net income attributable to shareholders was \$493 million, or \$2.11 cents per share, in the quarter ended Sept. 30, compared with \$48 million, or 19 cents per share, a year earlier. Total revenue rose 4.1 percent to \$10.89 billion from \$10.46 billion. Analysts had expected the company to report revenue of \$10.94 billion, according to Refinitiv data. — **Reuters**

The Philadelphia suburbs are home to some of the most competitive races in the country. Congressional seats, state Senate seats, and state House seats are all up for grabs in the city's collar counties, which have grown more liberal in recent years. Such high stakes can lead to election shenanigans or — depending on how you see things — political paranoia.

In Delaware County, two Democratic committee people's campaign signs went missing last month. Karen McCunny and Marie Turnbull had put up the signs to broadcast their support of Democratic state representative candidate Jen O'Mara. McCunny checked her security camera and made a **shocking discovery**: A man in a Springfield Township car had removed her sign.

Springfield Township Police Chief Joseph Daly said authorities later determined that the township employee, whom he declined to name, had taken both women's signs — at the direction of his boss. "He probably would have been charged, but he was under instruction by somebody," Daly said of the worker. According to Daly, the employee believed "there was some long-term agreement that nobody contemporary remembers" between Democrats and Republicans to not put up political signs in the township before Oct. 1. How political parties could ever keep such a promise — and why a township worker would ever think to uphold it — isn't entirely clear.

McCunny and Turnbull call it political hijinks. "I definitely think we were targeted because we are Democratic committee members," Turnbull said. "They're threatened because Jennifer O'Mara is running a good campaign." "My gut feeling is that they were just taking Democrats' signs," McCunny added. Delaware County Republican Party leader Andrew Reilly said, "There was no orchestrated or township-wide sanctioned effort to remove lawn signs. ... It was an employee operating under an old policy."

Asked if the township employee's superior was being reprimanded, Daly said, "All that was passed over to" Springfield Township Manager Lee Fulton. Fulton did not respond to a request for comment. "From their point of view, I would think the same thing," Daly said of the Democrats' belief that the sign brouhaha was politically motivated. "But I'm a proof guy. I just don't know if it's true or not." – *Philadelphia Daily News*

The general election is 11 days away, and you're probably already sick of campaign mailers piling up at your residence. But if you live in Pennsylvania's 157th House District, expect at least one more. A Chester County judge this week declared as "fraudulent" a mailing from a political action committee that inaccurately accused Republican State Rep. Warren Kampf of "living large on thousands of dollars in per diems." Members of the legislature can collect \$183 in tax-free per diems for travel expenses without providing receipts if they live outside a 50-mile radius of the state Capitol, all courtesy of taxpayers.

Kampf, seeking a fifth term in a district that covers parts of Chester and Montgomery Counties, doesn't collect per diems and never has. Instead, he files for individual expenses, such as miles and meals. The judge ordered PA Fund for Change, a pro-Democratic PAC that has declined to reveal details about its donors and spending plans, to send another mailing to about 12,000 addresses that received the first one, acknowledging it as deceptive.

Shelly Chauncey, an attorney for the PAC, said the ruling was disappointing: "We don't see the difference between per diems and accepting tens of thousands of dollars in reimbursement payments. In the grand scheme of things, it's all the same concept." A juicy bit of political intelligence came to the surface when Kampf testified for an injunction: His polling numbers against Democrat Melissa Shusterman have taken a nosedive in the closing weeks of the election. "Things are more difficult for me, according to the polls I've heard about in the last couple of weeks, probably because of the barrage of mail the Fund for Change has made about me," Kampf said.
– *Philadelphia Daily News*

