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USA Today
[Apple TV Plus launching Friday with lowest price for major subscription service](#)

New York Times
[Disney Is New to Streaming, but Its Marketing Is Unmatched](#)

Reuters

Blue Ridge Communications, a leading provider of high-speed Internet, TV and phone announced today that Amazon Prime Video will be launching on TiVo set top boxes this weekend. This integration will allow Blue Ridge TiVo customers to watch Amazon Studio Originals like Emmy winner "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," "Sneaky Pete," "Bosch," "Goliath" and the second season of Tom Clancy's "Jack Ryan," which begins on Nov. 1.

"Our customers have been asking for this, and we're thrilled to add Amazon Prime Video just in time for the holiday season," said Mark Masenheimer, vice president of operations for Blue Ridge. "A year ago, we successfully launched TiVo's Experience 4 — their most advanced platform, which unifies the viewing experience by seamlessly integrating live, recorded, on-demand and streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, You Tube, HBO Go and now, Amazon Prime Video. The ability to easily access and search for content coupled with the voice-activated remote control has really resonated with customers. They love being able to use their voice to launch an app or search for a movie or show," said Masenheimer.

To access Amazon Prime Video, customers will need to subscribe to Blue Ridge TiVo service, have a high-speed internet connection and a separate subscription to Amazon Prime Video. — **Lehigh Times-News**

AT&T to add new directors, sell up to \$10 billion in assets next year

Washington Post Facebook takes down false ad from political group. But it still won't police politicians directly.

Reuters Want to binge watch? New streaming TV services will make you wait

Wilkes-Barre Times Leader Pa. Secretary of State: Know your rights at the polls

Over persistent electronic buzzing, Brian Wrightson half shouts inside the control shed off Salem Mountain Road as he pulls assorted wireless microcells from their boxes.

How far his customers live from the control tower outside tells him what device he'll mount on the tops of their homes — or more frequently for his swelling customer base in Wayne County, the tops of their silos. "I'm trying to close the digital divide one silo at a time," the Archbald sales manager said with a wide grin. He sells fixed wireless internet service for Carbondale-based Icon Technologies Inc. The company started as a general information technology service in 1992. Two years later, Icon added alternative dial-up internet service.

Now Icon is tapping markets in Wayne, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties for fixed wireless, which major internet service providers are now starting to entertain amid heightened pressure to serve rural communities with broadband speeds. In the last round of Federal Communications Commission subsidies for rural broadband buildout, fixed wireless providers won about half of the \$1.5 billion pot to be spent over the next decade, according to the Wireless Internet Service Providers Association.

A Citizens' Voice/Times-Tribune analysis in August of on-the-ground speed test data found users' actual internet speeds clocked in far slower than what service providers tell the FCC they're delivering to specific regions. The phenomenon was especially true in rural, low-population communities, where heavy infrastructure spending makes less financial sense for service providers. "It's much easier for us to cover a low-density area," said Icon co-founder Alex Kelly. He started the company with partner Jim Racht. Ground-based wireless works as long as the receiver has a clear line of sight from the transmitter.

In Wayne County, Wrightson is working his way across the mountain ridges ubiquitous in the county. Earlier this month, on a dark, windy morning, he stood below an unused 105-foot silo on the Rickard farm in Cherry Ridge Twp. It may not hold silage any more, but its peak has a clear line of sight to the Carbondale Twp. tower about 8 miles away. The receiver, which resembles a little satellite dish, acts like a relay to redirect the signal to more customers in the immediate area.

Fifth-generation farmer Rich Rickard recently sold off all his dairy cows, a move predicated by years of unsustainable milk prices for local Pennsylvania farmers. As he turns his attention toward raising beef and other crops, reliable and quick access to the internet is an essential part of his business. "You need it to make sure you get the best price for food or supplies," he said, adding that he also must monitor beef prices, which change daily.

Before Icon, Rickard bought his internet connection from Verizon, which was inconsistent and often went down for days at a time following rainstorms. That doesn't happen any more. His 15-year-old son is a dutiful student, he boasted, who now more easily tackles his homework, which usually requires internet access to do. "It's all about my son," he said. "When he gets home from school, he wants to get his homework done." For competitive reasons, Kelly declined to say just how many customers buy Icon's fixed wireless but said they number in the hundreds, with the greatest share in Lackawanna

County. Icon has about 200,000 potential customers within its reach, he said.

Depending on the package, individual plans cost between \$40 and \$80 per month. Install fees range from \$50 to \$125. The company recently reached a deal with Honesdale to bring fixed wireless internet into downtown. As part of the deal, Icon will set up security cameras down Main Street at cost and pay a commission.

Honesdale Borough Council President Michael Augello said, if all goes according to plan, Icon's proposal is a boon for the town. He owns an appliance store and said customers frequently ask about alternative, more reliable internet options. "People are looking for affordable," he said. "The most common request we have from people is that they were looking for a lower-price internet than what was available from Verizon and Blue Ridge and others." – ***Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice***

Pennsylvania lives in a cave when it comes to modern elections, critics say, but fast-tracked legislation that was quietly negotiated behind closed doors could usher in some advancement.

The bill, should it pass, didn't come easily: Partisan jockeying, 11th-hour blowups and brinksmanship dogged what could be the most substantive changes to Pennsylvania's election laws in more than 80 years. "We've attacked the election code very little, so Pennsylvania is ranked in the very bottom tier of states in the country," said Micah Sims, executive director of Common Cause's Pennsylvania chapter. "That's why this moment right now is huge for Pennsylvania."

For now, negotiators — Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf and leaders of the House and Senate Republican majorities — are waiting to see whether the bill can overcome objections from rank-and-file lawmakers. Many states long ago adopted farther-reaching changes to election laws, including automatically registering people to vote when they turn 18, allowing election-day voter registration and opening polling places for early in-person voting.

This bill won't do that, and Wolf didn't get Republicans to embrace every election reform he had sought. But Wolf did get wins, including expanding voting access and securing millions of dollars for counties to buy voting machines ahead of the 2020 elections. Under the bill, voters can register up to 15 days before the election. Among states, Pennsylvania's current 30-day deadline is the furthest out, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Also, the bill allows any voter to mail in a ballot for any reason, adding Pennsylvania to a group of 31 states that already do so, according to the NCSL. Currently, Pennsylvania restricts mail-in ballots to "absentee" voters who meet a narrow set of reasons.

With a **[lawsuit pending over Pennsylvania's deadlines](#)** for counties to receive absentee ballots, the bill adjusts those deadlines to 8 p.m. on election days. Currently, the deadline is 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election, the nation's earliest. The bill is part of a broader deal to deliver \$90 million in state aid to counties to help them afford voting machines. Wolf had initially sought \$75 million toward a total price tag that could exceed \$125 million.

Wolf last year began [pressing counties to buy voting machines](#) with an auditable paper backup, contending it would bolster Pennsylvania's election security after warnings by federal authorities that Russian hackers had targeted states during 2016's election. The big win in the bill for Republicans? Eliminating the ballot option that allows voters to push one button that selects a single political party's candidate in each contest.

After objecting to Wolf's demand for new voting machines, Republicans made eliminating the straight-party ticket voting option a condition of any legislation that sends state voting-machine dollars to counties. The demand emerged amid Republican worries that moderate voters, angry at President Donald Trump, will simply pull the lever for Democrats in next year's election, endangering down-ballot Republicans in Pennsylvania's suburbs.

Closed-door talks on the package started after Wolf [vetoed Republican-backed legislation](#) in July that packaged \$90 million in voting-machine aid with the elimination of the straight-party ticket voting option. Top Republicans hadn't negotiated the bill with him, and it didn't include his election-reform priorities, he had said. One 11th-hour addition to the bill injected more intrigue.

Wording submitted by Senate Republicans removes the Department of State, which oversees elections, from the role of directing campaigns to provide receipts that show how campaign cash was spent. It instead makes a person seeking the receipts go to court against a defiant campaign. Pushback grew Tuesday when two news organizations, Spotlight PA and The Caucus, published a story about how some [Pennsylvania state lawmakers had reported campaign spending](#) on food, booze and travel as simply credit card payments or expense reimbursements, then took months to provide receipts.

The new provision raised red flags with watchdog groups, and lawmakers said they will remove it. The bill could pass as early as Wednesday, giving counties six months until the 2020 primary to absorb changes that, with compressed voter-registration deadlines and more mail-in votes, promise a bigger workload. "People need to be aware that there's a workload attached to it," said Douglas Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. "And we're going to do what we need to go to rise to the challenge." — ***Associated Press***

AT&T Inc. struck a truce with an activist investor that had been pressuring the telecom giant [to revamp its strategy](#) and said its chief executive will stay at the helm through next year.

The deal came as the company reported another quarter revealing the challenges of moving beyond its traditional telephone business. Overall, quarterly profit and revenue declined from a year ago. AT&T's core cellphone business gained subscribers but more than 1 million customers abandoned its DirecTV unit.

AT&T's deal with Elliott Management Corp. included a commitment to regular stock buybacks and a plan to appoint two new directors to its board. The board, led by Chairman and CEO Randall Stephenson, has 13 members. AT&T will nominate the new members who will replace

retiring directors. The company pledged to conduct a review of its portfolio, avoid major acquisitions and pay down debt **from its 2018 takeover** of Time Warner. AT&T also agreed to separate the roles of chairman and CEO when Mr. Stephenson retires.

Elliott, for its part, has no restrictions on its ability to publicly criticize the company going forward. Typically in a settlement an activist investor makes commitments as well, such as promising to not wage a proxy fight or keeping out of the public eye in exchange for some of its demands. Also unusual—the swiftness of the resolution. Elliott released its **23-page letter just seven weeks ago**. At the time, the Elliott partner who runs the hedge fund's U.S. equity activism, Jesse Cohn, had never met Mr. Stephenson, according to a person familiar with the matter. Since then, the two parties spoke several times a week and met in both New York and Dallas, this person said.

The deal solves problems for both sides. AT&T avoids a distracting fight with Elliott, an aggressive investment fund headed by billionaire Paul Singer. Elliott, for its part, might profit from the concessions the company is offering without having to mount a costly proxy battle. Shares of AT&T rose 2.2% in premarket trading on Monday.

In the third quarter, the Dallas company's entertainment division shed 1.4 million pay-TV customers. The losses included 1.2 million satellite and fiber-optic TV customers and a 195,000-subscriber decline at AT&T TV Now, the online channel bundle once called DirecTV Now. AT&T's wireless wing delivered a steadier performance, notching a 101,000-subscriber gain in postpaid phone subscribers, a valuable category of customers who pay for service at the end of the billing cycle. A year earlier, the company reported 69,000 net additions of postpaid accounts.

Rival Verizon Communications Inc. last week said it **posted a 444,000 gain** in postpaid phone connections in the third quarter. T-Mobile US Inc. is expected to report its quarterly numbers later Monday. AT&T reported a profit of \$3.7 billion, or 50 cents a share, in its latest quarter, down from \$4.72 billion, or 65 cents a share, a year earlier. Revenue fell 2.5% to \$44.6 billion. Revenue in the WarnerMedia unit declined 4.4% to \$7.8 billion after unusually high box-office receipts in the year-earlier period.

The company's three-year capital allocation plan announced Monday would retire all of the debt acquired from its Time Warner purchase. The plan calls for AT&T to spend 50% to 70% of its free cash flow after dividend payments on share buybacks and commits to "no major acquisitions." Mr. Stephenson said the financial road map benefited from input from investors like Elliott. The Wall Street Journal last week reported the two sides were holding talks about a series of steps AT&T could take to resolve the hedge fund's complaints about its performance and strategy.

AT&T became what its CEO calls a "modern media company" in 2018 through its \$80 billion-plus purchase of Time Warner, the owner of Warner Bros. studios, Turner cable channels and HBO. Executives said the deal, which followed a court fight with the federal government over whether it should be allowed, would help the telecom giant attract and keep customers by offering them top-tier films and TV shows.

The company has spent the past year developing a new subscription service **called HBO Max**, an online-only package of content from the premium TV brand as well as Warner Bros. movies and TV audience favorites such as “Friends.” The company will demonstrate the new service Tuesday at a Burbank, Calif., event after several setbacks that pushed the product’s full commercial launch to this spring. Its challenge is compounded by rival technology and media companies plowing billions of dollars into streaming video sites that will get the jump on HBO Max. Apple Inc. **will start showing the first TV series** produced for its \$4.99-a-month TV+ service on Nov. 1. Walt Disney Co. **will follow Nov. 12 with Disney+**, a library packed with popular movies from Marvel, Star Wars and its namesake studio for \$6.99 a month.

AT&T, the No. 2 U.S. cellphone carrier behind Verizon, ended the third quarter with 93 million domestic wireless subscribers, excluding connected devices and Mexico. It remained the biggest U.S. pay-TV distributor, with 21.6 million video subscribers, ahead of cable operator Comcast Corp. AT&T has spent most of 2019 focused on paying down the debt it took on through the purchases of Time Warner and DirecTV. Its reported net debt, which stood as high as \$170 billion last year, was down to \$159 billion at the end of the third quarter.

Asset sales have helped the company forecast less debt in the future. The company on Sunday said it will sell its minority stake in Central European Media Enterprises Ltd., a collection of TV broadcasters, to a Czech investment firm for \$1.1 billion in cash. AT&T also plans to sell **its cellphone and landline infrastructure in Puerto Rico** and the U.S. Virgin Islands for about \$2 billion to Liberty Latin America Ltd. – *Wall Street Journal*

Big Tech is hard to miss these days in Washington. So is its money. Lobbying expenditures by Facebook Inc., Amazon.com Inc., and Apple Inc. are on pace to hit record highs this year. Facebook increased spending by nearly 25%, to \$12.3 million, through the first nine months of the year over the same period in 2018, according to disclosures of lobbyists’ compensation filed with the federal government.

Amazon notched a 16% jump in lobbying outlays, to \$12.4 million, making it the top spender so far in 2019 among all companies, according to quarterly reports released last week. Apple boosted spending by 8% so far this year, and Microsoft Corp. by 9%. Among individual U.S. companies, Facebook was ranked No. 2 in lobbying spending through Sept. 30, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, followed by Northrop Grumman Corp. at \$11 million.

The tech lobbying uptick comes amid heightened scrutiny of tech companies in Washington. Facebook is **facing antitrust investigations** from the Federal Trade Commission, the Justice Department and state attorneys general. Amazon is a target of a nascent Federal Trade Commission probe into its market power. The House Judiciary Committee is examining Apple, Facebook and Amazon as well as search giant Google. The firms have said they welcome the scrutiny and are working with investigators.

Google **also faces antitrust probes** by the Justice Department and states. Its parent, Alphabet Inc., bucked the trend in lobbying spending,

posting a 41% decline amid a shake-up of its government affairs operation. Google still spent \$9.8 million on lobbying through Sept. 30, and like other big tech companies, it is taking steps to present a positive message to Washington. In subway stations and at Reagan National Airport, Google has papered turnstiles and walls touting its privacy controls. It also opened pop-up kiosks where consumers could get personalized guidance to set their privacy settings to secure their data.

Amazon took over a busy pedestrian square near the National Mall this month to showcase the mom-and-pop sellers on its marketplace, a not-so-subtle response to those who say the e-commerce titan is suffocating small businesses. Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg is suddenly a regular presence, making three visits to Washington in the past five weeks including a policy speech at Georgetown University and a stop at the White House. "I'm not sure whether Mr. Zuckerberg has bought an apartment here yet or not, but he is certainly spending much, much more time and not just him," said Rep. Bill Huizenga (R., Mich.). "They were behind the curve in getting out talking to policy makers."

A Google spokeswoman said the privacy kiosks and ads were designed to help consumers and tied to National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Nicholas Denisson, Amazon's vice president of small business, said the small-business event was a first, but that company has long recognized small sellers in other ways. Facebook and Apple declined to comment.

Some consumer advocates view tech firms' spending as a means of gaining allies ahead of what could be bruising months to come. "When you don't have a home in terms of the political parties in Washington, D.C., you have to do your best to buy one," said Mike Tanglis, research director at Public Citizen, which supports breaking up large tech firms. One driver of the spending by Facebook and Amazon: the firms' expanding ambitions.

Before this year, Facebook didn't often deal with financial issues on Capitol Hill. Then in June it announced plans for [a global cryptocurrency](#), drawing a barrage of criticism. It has since hired seven new outside lobbying firms to work on financial issues, including two former aides to the GOP chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. Amazon wants more government business, and on Friday [lost a Pentagon cloud-computing deal](#) worth as much as \$10 billion to Microsoft. Amazon has brought on seven additional outside lobbying shops since the middle of 2018, including former members of Congress and congressional aides who work to influence federal spending.

Apple still spends less than other tech giants, but is also facing new threats in Washington. It is a target of the House antitrust probe, and Chief Executive Tim Cook [has forged a relationship](#) with President Trump in an effort to keep tariffs off the iPhones and other products it imports from China. Apple spent \$5.5 million through Sept. 30, and Microsoft Corp. spent \$7.8 million.

The decline in Google's lobbying spending follows recent leadership changes, including firing a number of its U.S. lobbying firms. Last month, it brought on Mark Isakowitz, former chief of staff to Sen. Rob

Portman (R., Ohio), to captain its Washington, D.C., office. Google touted its own small-business chops at a June event in the Capitol hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which counts Google as a paying member.

Reporters, congressional staffers, and others found on their seats a glossy flier explaining how Google's YouTube helps U.S. small businesses find customers abroad. Chief Executive Sundar Pichai spoke about digital trade, then yielded the floor to sellers of bedding and children's bicycles. Amazon has brought sellers to Washington to speak to their local member of Congress about their success, according to congressional aides. An Amazon spokeswoman said these meetings began before the antitrust probes. And on a sunny afternoon in Washington's Wharf neighborhood near the National Mall earlier this month, Amazon featured about 20 purveyors of snacks, candles, headphones and more who handed out samples and business cards to passersby. Behind an "Amazon Small Business Spotlight" sign, they took turns sitting in a makeshift TV studio for interviews broadcast on Amazon.com.

For its part, Facebook sponsored a September event hosted by publisher the Atlantic, putting its name on a lounge area where attendees were invited to work and take meetings. The sponsorship gave Nick Clegg, the former U.K. deputy prime minister leading Facebook's policy and communications work, a platform to preach against Big Tech breakups. "Pulling apart these tech companies isn't going to do anything to deal with some of the underlying challenges we all have to rise together to meet," Mr. Clegg said.

Mr. Zuckerberg's recent schedule has included face time with President Trump, lawmakers in both parties and television hosts. His pushback against calls for Facebook to take down inaccurate political ads won him praise from critics including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.), who has accused social media firms of censoring conservatives.

Before his testimony at the House Financial Services Committee last week, Mr. Zuckerberg visited Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D., Mo.), one of the panel's senior members. The scheduled 30-minute meeting ran more than an hour as they discussed the company's efforts to combat dangerous speech, Mr. Cleaver said. At the hearing, Mr. Zuckerberg faced hostile questions. But afterward Mr. Cleaver, recalling the face-to-face meeting, said: "I feel better about Facebook and better about Mr. Zuckerberg." Ahead of the testimony, Facebook gave lawmakers a sheet estimating how many small businesses in their district use the social-media platform. "Facebook is proudly supporting your community," it read. — *Wall Street Journal*

