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Between working from home, virtual learning, and family zooms, having access to reliable internet is more important than ever. Luckily, a recent announcement from Comcast will help many families stay connected without breaking the bank. Comcast announced Monday it will continue to provide free Internet service for the first 60 days for new Internet Essentials customers, and free access to public Xfinity WiFi hotspots, through June 30, 2021.

There are over 1.5 million Xfinity WiFi hotspots in business and outdoor locations, making it the largest public WiFi network in the country. The hotspots are available to anyone who needs them for free, including non-Xfinity Internet subscribers. Internet Essentials is a broadband adoption program that provides high-speed Internet service to low-income families. The program has connected more than four million low-income students since its inception, according to Comcast.

New customers who sign up for Internet Essentials before June 30, 2021, will receive 60 days of complimentary service. Comcast will also continue to waive the requirement that customers not have back debt due, so more families can apply. "Our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure our network is operating at peak performance and help our customers and our communities navigate this unprecedented crisis," said Dave Watson, Chief Executive Officer, Comcast Cable. "For nearly a decade, we've been on a mission to ensure students have the resources they need to be successful. We have accelerated that work during COVID-19 by partnering with public schools to provide Internet for more low-income students and by working with community centers to create safe spaces for families to connect to free WiFi through Lift Zones." This is the third time Comcast extended these commitments for the COVID-19 pandemic.

– **NorthcentralPA.com**

Verizon Communications Inc. and other cellphone providers are expected to spend billions of dollars to secure prized spectrum for their 5G networks in a U.S. government sale that kicks off Tuesday. The Federal Communications Commission is launching a new auction for C-band airwaves, a stretch of wireless frequencies especially valued by companies trying to offer the fifth-generation service.

Typical bidders like Verizon, AT&T Inc. and T-Mobile US Inc. registered to participate. Cable, technology and investment companies also entered the contest, which could last several weeks. "They all need to have a foot in the door," said Davis Hebert, an analyst at debt research firm CreditSights. "C-band is going to be the cornerstone of 5G networks for the next decade."

Wall Street analysts expect the auction to raise tens of billions of dollars over the coming weeks, a reflection of high demand. The frequencies sit in what telecom executives consider a "sweet spot" for 5G transmissions because they can move plenty of data quickly while still traveling long distances from a cellular tower.

CreditSights expects bidders to spend about \$38 billion to secure the assets. Mr. Hebert expects cellphone carriers to "play it safe from a credit perspective" to avoid dragging down their bond ratings, which could limit their ability to outbid other participants. New Street Research told its clients the licenses could fetch \$52 billion if bidders use all the resources at their disposal, though the total could be much less if federal officials make a concerted effort to privatize nearby Defense Department spectrum, adding more potential supply to the mix. Either way, New Street predicted the bake-off "will be hard fought with carriers winning spectrum based on their balance sheet capacity."

The wide-ranging projections reflect the uncertainty surrounding an auction that took years to prepare. Satellite companies already use C-band airwaves to beam TV feeds and other content to receivers in the U.S. The satellite operators **agreed to clear some space for cellphone companies** after a drawn-out lobbying fight that delayed the sale of new licenses. Verizon tapped the debt markets earlier this year to build up cash before the auction. T-Mobile,

which absorbed rival Sprint Corp. earlier this year, also has cash on hand for bidding. Investors expect Verizon, the country's largest carrier in terms of subscribers, to bid aggressively to bolster its relatively low share of midrange spectrum. Spokespeople for AT&T and Verizon declined to comment. T-Mobile didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. FCC rules barring coordinated bids often constrain companies' ability to discuss the auction.

The FCC is kick-starting the auction as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to nominate a new chairman to steer the commission. Current Chairman Ajit Pai, a Republican, [has announced plans to leave](#) in January. The transition won't affect the continuing auction, which commission staff members oversee.

The FCC once doled out permission for radio and TV stations to use certain frequencies for free. The telecom regulator started selling new spectrum rights as demand for the resource grew. Auction spending surged as the smartphone explosion fueled demand for more data on the go. The public ultimately benefits from the government's sale of new licenses, with proceeds from the winning bids steered to the U.S. Treasury. But the companies that win the licenses must pay for the assets through new borrowing, which is ultimately secured by the fees they charge their customers. The commission's most expensive auction [closed in 2015 with nearly \\$45 billion](#) in bids. The winners quickly used the licenses to bolster their 4G service, allowing their customers to stream more music and videos. – *Wall Street Journal*

President Donald Trump called the speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives twice during the past week to make an extraordinary request for help reversing his loss in the state, reflecting a broadening pressure campaign by the president and his allies to try to subvert the 2020 election result. The calls, confirmed by House Speaker Bryan Cutler's office, make Pennsylvania the third state where Trump has directly attempted to overturn a result since he lost the election to President-elect Joe Biden. He previously reached out to Republicans in Michigan, and on Saturday he pressured Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in a call to try to replace that state's electors.

The president's outreach to Pennsylvania's Republican House leader came after his campaign and its allies decisively lost numerous legal challenges in the state in state and federal court. Trump has continued to press his baseless claims of widespread voting irregularities publicly and privately. "The president said, 'I'm hearing about all these issues in Philadelphia, and these issues with your law,' " said Cutler spokesman Michael Straub, describing the House speaker's two conversations with Trump. " 'What can we do to fix it?' " A White House spokesman declined to comment on the calls to Cutler, and a Trump campaign spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

Cutler told the president that the legislature had no power to overturn the state's chosen slate of electors, Straub said. But late last week, the House speaker was among about 60 Republican state lawmakers who sent a letter to Pennsylvania's congressional representatives urging them to object to the state's electoral slate on Jan. 6, when Congress formally accepts the results. Although such a move is highly unlikely to gain traction, at least one Pennsylvania Republican, Rep. Scott Perry, said in an interview Monday that he will heed the request and dispute the state's electors.

The embrace of Trump's false claims by many Pennsylvania GOP lawmakers shows how the president's baseless attacks on the integrity of the election have gained traction with his supporters. Protesters chanting "Stop the Steal," some with firearms, demonstrated over the weekend at the homes of Cutler in Pennsylvania and the Democratic secretary of state in Michigan. Trump stoked those flames at a rally for two Republican Senate candidates in Georgia on Saturday, when he spoke for an hour and 40 minutes almost exclusively about fraud. "We will find that hundreds of thousands of ballots were illegally cast in your state and all over the country, by the way, more than enough to give us a total historic victory," Trump said. "This is our country ... they are trying to take it from us through rigging, fraud, deception and deceit." He added: "Hopefully,

our legislatures and the United States Supreme Court will step forward to save our country."

Trump's continued embrace of such rhetoric has prompted fresh alarm among Democrats and some Republicans, who fear that the president is inciting violence. And while his efforts to overturn the result are widely viewed as fruitless, many officials said they are distressed at the lasting harm they believe he is doing to public faith in U.S. elections. The false narrative "gets people to a place where they are now livid because they believe that their democracy has been ripped away from them, and that the election has actually been stolen," said Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, a Democrat. "And it causes them to commit these desperate acts."

Dozens of protesters showed up late Saturday at the home of Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson in Detroit, promoting more false accusations that fraud had tainted Biden's victory in the state. Nessel noted that the protesters, some armed with bullhorns and some armed with guns, arrived shortly after the end of Trump's rally in Georgia. She said neighbors came out to plead with the protesters to go home because they were scaring children — including Benson's 4-year-old son. "This should not be happening in a civil, polite, democratic society," said Nessel, who spent much of her Saturday evening on the phone making sure Benson, a Democrat, and her family were safe. "But here we are. And this would all come to an end tomorrow if the president would do what any decent person would do and say, 'You know what, I concede the election.' "

In a CNN interview Monday night, House Majority Whip Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., warned that Trump's rhetoric and the actions of some House Republicans may potentially "incite people to do and say things they may not ordinarily do," adding: "They're really trying to invite insurrection."

In Pennsylvania, the effort appears to have produced some political results. In their Dec. 4 letter to the state's congressional delegation, GOP state lawmakers claimed that the Democratic secretary of state's easing of election restrictions to accommodate the coronavirus pandemic violated state law and "undermined the lawful certification" of Pennsylvania's electors. They asked the state's congressional members to object to their own state's electoral votes.

To succeed, such a challenge requires support from both a representative and a senator, and must survive a vote of both chambers. No Republican senator has voiced support for such a maneuver, which in any event would fail in the Democratic-controlled House. Still, Perry said Monday that he "will honor" the concerns of his state colleagues and is prepared to object. "My concerns are that we don't know if this was a fair and free election and that we don't know if fraud was committed," he said. Perry joins Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Ala., who last week announced plans to challenge the electoral college vote.

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a Trump ally, said Monday that he was "totally for that," adding that millions of Americans who voted for Trump "think the election was stolen." Straub, the spokesman for Cutler, said the letter to the congressional delegation had been in the works before the calls he received from Trump. He said Trump wanted to know what the state legislature could do to overturn the result, and Cutler spent both calls explaining that the legislature has no power to intervene.

Under rules set out in the Pennsylvania Constitution, the General Assembly is not currently in session. Only Gov. Tom Wolf — a Democrat — or a court has the power to order a special session, Cutler explained to the president. Cutler also made clear that any allegations of fraud would have to be proved in court, Straub said. Straub said that the calls between Cutler and Trump were "amicable" and that the president did not "pressure" Cutler in a hostile way.

Yet Straub also acknowledged that the pressure on Cutler — who faces a reelection vote for House speaker on Jan. 5 — has been intense. His office

phone system, which has the capacity to store many thousands of voicemails, has been completely filled "several times" over the past week, Straub said. Meanwhile, 32 Republican state legislators joined a legal effort to try to nullify the certification of Biden's victory, claiming in a brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday that they may be empowered to step in "when a state has failed to choose its electors on election day."

While Trump was seeking to make inroads with GOP leadership in Pennsylvania, he called Kemp on Saturday, berating the Republican Georgia governor for not calling a special session to take up legislation that would change the way the state's electors are chosen. Kemp spokesman Cody Hall said that while the governor does have the power to call a session, he must give a reason for doing so. As in Pennsylvania, there is no legal recourse for the Georgia legislature to alter the election after the fact, and therefore no legitimate reason to call a session. "Any attempt by the legislature to retroactively change that process for the Nov. 3rd election would be unconstitutional and immediately enjoined by the courts, resulting in a long legal dispute and no short-term resolution," Kemp said in a joint statement issued Sunday with his lieutenant governor, Geoff Duncan.

Several Republican strategists who spoke candidly on the condition of anonymity said they believe that Trump has reserved a special level of anger for Kemp in part because Georgia is the most conservative state he lost and therefore his most embarrassing defeat. The president has told advisers that he would be interested in working against Kemp in his reelection bid in 2022, according to two aides. "I put this guy in office, he's there because of me," Trump said about Kemp, railing about his "disloyalty," one of the advisers said.

At the rally Saturday in Valdosta for Republican Sens. Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, who face runoff elections Jan. 5, Trump praised Rep. Douglas Collins, R-Ga., who is leading the campaign's effort to prove fraud in the state — and sent a shot at Kemp in the process. "Thank you, Doug. What a job he does. Thank you. Doug, you want to run for governor in two years?" Trump is considering a second trip to Georgia before Christmas, and aides said they expect him to rip into Kemp again then.

The president has also publicly attacked Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican who signed the state's results certification despite the president's exhortations not to. Ducey has described his relationship with the president as "tense and strained," according to a person who has spoken to him. A spokesman for Ducey did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Despite the heightened effort to pressure public officials, there is little sense inside Trump's campaign that the effort is working. The president has complained to several advisers that a string of events with state lawmakers and his own attorneys in Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania did not get him any closer to victory.

One of those lawyers, Rudy Giuliani, is now hospitalized after testing positive for the novel coronavirus, which can cause the illness covid-19. And Dec. 14, the day when the electoral college will meet and vote in state capitals across the nation, is a week away. "When it comes to lawsuits, we're 1 for 33. All I can say is time is ticking," Sen. Lindsey O. Graham, R-S.C., a Trump ally who has promoted the president's false accusations of fraud, said in an interview last week. "I told the president to keep fighting, but time matters. You've got to have a very coherent theory of the law. The burden of the proof is on the plaintiff."

The outlook is similar inside the White House, where administration officials have begun discussing who will stay until Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration to help with the transition and who will leave ahead of that date, according to people familiar with the conversations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private discussions. The legal defeats, meanwhile, continued to mount Monday — as did the inevitability of Biden's victory. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, recertified the state's election results after a second statewide recount of presidential votes. The presidential

ballots in Georgia have now been counted three times, each time delivering the state to Biden.

A Fulton County Superior Court judge on Monday dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Trump campaign alleging widespread voter fraud because the team's lawyers did not pay the proper filing fee or fill out their documents correctly, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. One official involved in the campaign said Trump spends almost all of his days obsessing over voter fraud and searching for ways to reverse his defeat. He has asked Giuliani and one of his campaign lawyers, Jenna Ellis, for more names of lawmakers he should be calling. "He's going to keep doing this until the 14th at the least," one Republican involved in the operation said. "The president sees no advantage to stopping this." – **Washington Post**

