

Telecompaper
Atlantic Broadband launches new channels in selected states

CNET
PA Cong. Mike Doyle (D-14th) weighs in on net neutrality with U.S. Reps. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ)

Pennlive
Police warn of fake Netflix email scam seeking to steal personal information

Washington Post
Facebook says a new bug allowed apps to access private photos of up to 6.8 million users

New York Times
Google to Add \$1 Billion New York Campus for 7,000 More Workers

Philadelphia Inquirer
Fight over Lindsey Williams' residency brings Pa. Senate into uncommon political territory

Allentown Morning Call
Pennsylvania's Lou Barletta reflects on congressional tenure amid final days in D.C.

Philadelphia Inquirer
Despite advisers' convictions, Bob Brady retains grip

A Penn State study of broadband access across the state, due out in January, will likely demonstrate that federal data about availability of high-speed internet is misleading, the director of the study said Thursday.

The federal government estimates that more than 800,000 Pennsylvanians lack access to affordable broadband Internet. An estimated 520,000 of those who have limited or no broadband access live in the rural part of the state. That data probably isn't an accurate reflection of the actual scope of the broadband gap, said Barry Denk, executive director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, which commissioned the Penn State research. The number of people without access to high-speed internet is probably higher than the federal data suggests because of the way those estimates were generated, he said.

The FCC data is based on reports from internet service providers. The estimates are derived from population data by census block – and if telecommunications company says it provides broadband in an area, all residents of that the area are counted like they have access to high-speed internet. But in rural areas, in particular, those estimates may be out-of-whack, Denk said. "I'm not pointing fingers. They are reporting what they're being asked to report, he said.

To provide a better snapshot, the Penn State researchers have created an online speed test that people can use to measure how fast the internet is at their homes or businesses. The test has been run 5.7 million times, Denk said. That will allow the researchers to be able to create maps showing what speed internet service is available in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, and provide the same data for each state House and state Senate district, he said. That data will be important to inform policy discussions, he said. But the data is the not the only consideration, Denk said.

State officials need to also understand the real-world implications of the lack of broadband. His group held a hearing in northcentral Pennsylvania last summer to give people the opportunity to explain how lack of high-speed internet is impacting them. The lack of high-speed internet will also be an impediment to efforts to use telemedicine to improve rural health care, Denk said.

Denk noted that the Center for Rural Pennsylvania heard from a farmer in Erie County who said he's had to load all of his financial documents onto a thumb drive to take to his accountant. They also heard from a rural school superintendent who talked about how all students had been given laptops or iPads, but that some students couldn't use the devices for homework because their families don't have high-speed internet at home.

That problem was noted by state Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill in a memo to lawmakers seeking support for proposed legislation to encourage state efforts to diminish the digital divide in rural Pennsylvania. In areas of the state where broadband isn't widespread, one can often arrive at schools 30 minutes before the start of the school day and observe

[on Philly Democratic Party](#)

parents in their idling cars while their children feverishly work to complete their computer homework assignments using the school Wi-Fi because high-speed broadband internet is unavailable in their residential areas,” she wrote.

Phillips-Hill has proposed legislation that would direct the state to launch an analysis of state-owned communication towers, buildings and facilities to determine if the state can “leverage existing state-owned assets” to expand the availability of high-speed internet. The biggest hurdle is finding a way to help telecommunications companies see an incentive in rolling out high-speed internet in areas where there isn’t a great density of customers, Denk said.

The federal government can play a role, said state Sen. Gene Yaw, R-Lycoming County, the chairman of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. He noted that in his northcentral Pennsylvania senatorial district, Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative was the biggest recipient of federal Connect America Fund grants announced in September. The company got \$3.2 million from Connect America and another \$1.5 million from the state to install infrastructure for broadband in Potter County. It’s the first rural electric cooperative to launch an effort to provide high-speed internet, and Yaw said they can demonstrate how the service can be rolled out into under-served areas. — cnhi.com

A GOP implosion in Pennsylvania has Republicans alarmed about President Donald Trump's reelection prospects in a state that proved essential to his 2016 victory.

The enfeebled state party — still reeling after a devastating midterm election where Republicans lost three congressional seats and whiffed gubernatorial and Senate races by double digits — is tangled in a power struggle messy enough to capture the attention of the White House. The chaos threatens the president's chances in a state where there's no room for error. Trump, the first Republican presidential nominee to carry the state since 1988, won by less than a percentage point. “He has to win Pennsylvania in order to win the presidency,” said Republican Rep. Ryan Costello, a one-time rising star from the Philadelphia suburbs who is retiring from Congress after just two terms. “And I don't think he's the favorite to win against a generic Democrat.”

Since Trump's stunning 2016 win, Pennsylvania Republicans have gotten almost exclusively bad news. First, Democrats in the Philadelphia suburbs [flipped seats in 2017 local elections for the first time in decades](#) — and in some cases, in history. Then came an election year from hell, beginning with Democrat Conor Lamb's House special election victory smack dab in the middle of western Pennsylvania's Trump Country. A #MeToo scandal [ended one congressman's career](#). The Pennsylvania Supreme Court blew up the state's gerrymandered congressional map and [redrew it to the Democrats' benefit](#), leading Costello to announce [he wouldn't run for reelection](#).

Then Nov. 6, 2018, happened. GOP Rep. Lou Barletta, who tied himself closely to the president, lost by nearly 700,000 votes in his challenge to Democratic Sen. Bob Casey. The result in the governor's race was even worse: Republican Scott Wagner lost by more than

800,000 votes. “These weren’t just defeats. They were bad defeats,” said Pennsylvania-based GOP consultant Charlie Gerow. “The party has to be unified in order to win in 2020.”

The bleeding has led a faction of Republicans to point their fingers at the state party chairman: Val DiGiorgio, who hails from populous and increasingly Democratic southeastern Pennsylvania. “The 2018 results clearly indicate that leadership needs to be looked at — there’s no doubt in my mind there,” said Bruce Hottle, a state party committee member from western Pennsylvania, a Trump stronghold.

The list of complaints about DiGiorgio is long: He’s a bad fundraiser. His staff is anemic. Though he eventually got behind Trump in 2016, he initially backed Florida Sen. Marco Rubio in the primary. And after a bruising election for state committee leader in 2017 — DiGiorgio won by just two votes — his critics say he hasn’t put the party back together. “Our position was much better two years ago. A blind man would see that,” said Mike Cibik, a state party committee member living in Philadelphia. “There isn’t sufficient staff … and they aren’t raising money.”

DiGiorgio’s supporters argue that he did everything he could in a year that was devastating for Republicans across the country, and that his critics are merely bitter after backing his opponent in the 2017 election for state party leader. They also point out that the state GOP’s two committees brought in roughly the same amount of money during the 2017-18 midterm cycle as in the 2013-14 period, though the party relied more on funding from the Republican National Committee this time around. “During tough times this cycle, Chairman Val DiGiorgio was a sure and steady leader for Republican candidates up and down the ticket,” said Republican Joe Scarnati, the state Senate president pro tempore.

The Trump White House, which has a history of intervening in state party leadership fights, is well aware of the Pennsylvania unrest. Top Trump allies are eager to have a strong Trump voice atop the state party in 2020. In Ohio and Michigan — two battleground states that, like Pennsylvania, were critical to Trump’s election — the president and his allies helped put loyalists at the helm of the state GOP committees ahead of the midterm election.

But in Pennsylvania, the Trump team sat out the election for state party chairman in 2017 — and some state Republicans now fear that was a mistake. In 2016, the Trump campaign, RNC and state GOP worked together closely to build a ground operation for the president. DiGiorgio’s critics fear that, in particular, could be at risk if the party isn’t fortified. “The ground game was important and took resources, people power, and money,” said Cibik. “We’re going to need that again in 2020, and right now, I don’t feel good about it.”

A source familiar with the Trump campaign, though, dismissed concerns about the issue: “The RNC is going to execute a [ground game] plan through the state party whether Val raises \$100,000 or \$100 million.” The Republican State Committee of Pennsylvania only has \$94,000 on hand, according to campaign finance reports — almost \$1 million less than the party had at the same point four years ago. The party’s headquarters staff has shrunk from between 16 employees

in 2014, according to the previous chairman, to seven. DiGiorgio said he prefers "we put money into the field."

The state GOP also has a separate federal committee with about \$320,000 on hand, about \$50,000 more than it had in the bank four years ago. Rumors are swirling that DiGiorgio's critics may try to force a vote of no confidence at the state party's next meeting in early 2019, though it's unclear how that would work procedurally or what would come next if the rebels were successful. DiGiorgio's term is not over until 2021.

But there's already been fallout for DiGiorgio: Since taking the reins at the state committee last February, he has faced criticism for not relinquishing his position as GOP leader in his home county of Chester — an affluent, highly educated, historically Republican collar county that voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Earlier this month, after Chester County suffered some of the biggest GOP losses in the state in November, he stepped down from that role. Trump campaign officials were in touch with DiGiorgio this month and plan to meet with him in the coming weeks, DiGiorgio's team confirmed.

Chris Carr, political director for the Trump reelection campaign, said in a statement: "In a difficult year, the PA GOP was able to overcome many challenges. The organization supported Republican candidates up and down the ballot, made record-setting number of voter contacts, helped maintain majorities in both chambers of the state legislature, and deployed new campaign technology. All these efforts are a good start on the efforts the PA GOP will bring to the table to help President Trump get reelected in 2020." To some Republicans, especially those who lost reelection in November, Trump himself is largely responsible for the GOP's shellacking in Pennsylvania.

Costello, who has been critical of the president, said the GOP's double-digit losses in the state House in Harrisburg are "probably the best example of reverse coattails" this year. "You're talking about well-liked, experienced state representatives who worked their districts well and lost," he said. "And they lost because people were just disgusted with Republicans."

DiGiorgio has fought back aggressively against his critics, characterizing them as "people who have a sour-grapes agenda who lost the chairman election" and arguing that "there's no one in the state who's been more supportive of President Trump than I have." His team shared a list of positive statements from some 10 elected officials, candidates, and donors.

Bob Asher, a top GOP fundraiser in Pennsylvania and an RNC member, called "on all sides to put aside their petty differences and work together." "These comments and allegations are counterproductive to what has been done and what we are continuing to try and accomplish in Pennsylvania," he said. "It is a detriment to party unity and will only serve to hinder the president's and congressional candidates' chances in 2020."

Republicans haven't hit the panic button just yet. A top Pennsylvania political operative with close ties to the Trump campaign said "you may not get the door-knocking out of the party apparatus in the suburbs like you used to," but "there's still plenty of time to address those issues"

before the presidential race. Still, the last thing Republicans need in 2020 in a must-win state for Trump is a civil war. “The only Republican who’s won Pennsylvania twice in the last 60 years-plus was Ronald Reagan,” said Gerow. “A divided party won’t prevail.” — ***Politico***

Philadelphia continues its race to the bottom when it comes to poverty, with new reports over the past few weeks that show a grim picture getting grimmer. Already, the city suffers from a 26 percent poverty rate. Last week, [a new, five-year federal survey](#) showed white poverty exploding in the city, with sharp declines in income in certain neighborhoods, and sharp rises in others — a dynamic solidifying income inequality.

This week, another census report showed that the city has one of the lowest rates of internet penetration among the 25 largest cities. Philadelphia’s broadband penetration rate is 71.6 percent, compared with the national rate of 83.5 percent last year. And it’s a number moving in the wrong direction, according to [the Inquirer report](#) on the findings.

It might be easy to argue that the reports on scarcity of food, jobs, and affordable housing are far more worrisome than the ability to access the internet, and that’s true, but they are all intertwined as essential to making sure economic opportunities aren’t limited to only a percentage of the population. While many low-income people have smartphones with internet access, broadband access is necessary for such functions as job applications and homework assignments.

Internet access is essential to individual economic viability. Racial disparities underlying the digital divide also make this a civil rights issue. In fact, the United Nations last year claimed internet access to be a human right. That’s a powerful statement and must be taken seriously if we’re going to halt the creation of a permanent underclass.

This digital divide is not just a problem for Philadelphia; it’s a problem for the country. But the presence of Comcast’s world headquarters here lends an ironic edge to the problem — one that the company should consider taking more seriously. The company routinely touts its “Internet Essentials” program, which provides low-cost internet service to low-income families. It recently expanded access to seniors, veterans, and public housing residents. The company, however, is maddeningly opaque on the numbers of current enrollees; it will only say that 49,000 Philadelphia households have signed up over the life of the program, which began in 2011, right before [Comcast acquired NBCUniversal](#). (While poverty rates are determined by family size, more than 250,000 Philadelphia households make less than \$35,000 per year, according to the Census.) While Comcast is no longer obligated to offer the program, it still does. But the size and seriousness of the divide in Philadelphia says more needs to be done.

It’s not up to Comcast to close this divide alone. But it’s large enough to wield serious influence with other technology companies, to come up with more effective solutions to expanding access to technology. In the city, large numbers of those without broadband take advantage of libraries, but the [Kenney administration is still figuring out](#) how to keep all branches open seven days a week. (Maybe a large, Philadelphia-based internet provider could dramatically expand its impact by helping to solve that problem.) Given the reports, it’s tempting to write off the

poverty problem as intractable. It isn't. But it's going to require radical new thinking and fuller participation from the city leaders across all sectors. — *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial



**Broadband
Cable Association
of Pennsylvania**

127 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-214-2000 (f) 717-214-2020
bcapa.com

First in Broadband.
The Future of Broadband.®