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**State Rep. Pam Snyder**, D-Greene/Fayette/Washington, today was sworn into office for her fourth two-year term representing the 50th Legislative District. "It's the beginning of a new year and also the beginning of a new session. I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to best represent my district and my constituents' needs," Snyder said. "There is a lot of work to be done, but I'm confident my fellow legislators and I – from both sides of the aisle – will work in unison to advance the interests of all residents across the commonwealth."

Snyder is already fast at work, noting she plans to continue her hardline approach of bringing her constituents and other underserved and unserved rural communities access to high-speed broadband internet service. During the 2017-18 legislative session, Snyder and then-state representative and current state [Sen.-elect Kristin Phillips-Hill](#), R-York, formed the Broadband Caucus. Snyder said they plan to make this a bicameral caucus, spearheaded in the Senate by Phillips-Hill and Snyder at the helm in the House.

She already has circulated 10 pieces of legislation to House members for co-sponsorship. The bills include allowing farmers' markets and roadside farm stands the opportunity to post signs along state roadways that advertise the sale of fresh produce; establishing early voting in Pennsylvania; implementing real estate tax deductions for disabled veterans; promoting mine subsidence insurance for at-risk homebuyers; and solidifying measures to protect corrections officers at State Correctional Institutions.

The bill package angled toward corrections officers' safety comes on the heels of a rather violent year at state prisons, which include more than 460 staff assaults and the murder of Sgt. Mark Baserman in February 2018 at SCI-Somerset. "It's been a tough year for first responders and corrections officers alike, and I think it's of the utmost importance for legislators here at the Capitol to act in favor of those who put their lives on the line each day," Snyder said. "The upcoming bill package I plan to help introduce was crafted with corrections officers' safety and well-being in mind." – [Uniontown \(Fayette Co.\) Herald-Standard](#)

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The battle over net neutrality is far from over.

Although the Federal Communications Commission last year officially nixed its rules governing the conduct of internet providers such as Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T, the move kicked off a backlash by states, internet activists, and other supporters of the Obama-era regulations whose effects will play out in 2019. Here's what to expect as the fight over the future of the internet enters its next act.

Supporters of the net neutrality rules — which were intended to prevent internet providers from blocking, slowing, or selectively speeding up apps and services — have taken the FCC to court in an

effort to overturn its repeal decision. That case goes to oral argument in early February.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit revealed the names of the three judges who will be deciding the case: Judith Rogers, Patricia Millett, and Stephen Williams. Of the three, Williams is a familiar face. Appointed to the court by President Ronald Reagan, Williams served on the three-judge panel that heard the previous case on net neutrality, and he was the lone partial dissenter in the 2016 decision that upheld the regulations in the face of a challenge by broadband companies.

The two other judges on the list are Democratic appointees: Rogers was nominated by President Bill Clinton and Millett by President Barack Obama. Millett has argued forcefully for reproductive rights and has been called a “worthy successor of Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” according to Slate. Rogers is considered a politically moderate judge who is meticulous in her knowledge of the way federal agencies properly make decisions — which will be the key issue facing the court when groups such as Mozilla face off against the FCC on Feb. 1.

Rogers' understated style and mild manner aren't likely to give away to the courtroom which arguments she finds more compelling. But persuading her is likely the key to victory, said Andrew Schwartzman, a lecturer in law at Georgetown University. "Judge Rogers is the vote that the FCC needs to win," said Schwartzman, who quickly added that few things are ever certain when it comes to speculating about court decisions. The D.C. Circuit's decision is expected to set the tone for other court fights over net neutrality, in particular the Trump administration's legal efforts to block California from enforcing its own net neutrality legislation.

The state law, which is regarded as the strongest in the nation because it prohibits even some ISP activities that the FCC's original rules didn't, was passed last year. But moments after it was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, the Justice Department said it would sue the state. A month later, the two sides agreed to a truce: The legislation still took effect on Jan. 1, but California isn't enforcing the law; the Justice Department is suspending its litigation until the D.C. Circuit case is resolved.

That resolution, however, could take more time than anticipated: The partial government shutdown is expected to close the FCC's doors Thursday, forcing the agency to send home all but its most critical support personnel. Meanwhile, the federal court system has enough money to operate through Jan. 11. While oral arguments at the D.C. Circuit will continue through January, according to the court's website, there is no word on whether the Feb. 1 oral argument on net neutrality will be postponed. But if and when the D.C. Circuit hears the case and issues an opinion, expect the battle to continue over whether states can legally establish net neutrality laws independent of the FCC. That debate could significantly shape the power of state governments on a range of issues, not just net neutrality.

While many experts had hoped Congress would finish the net neutrality fight decisively with clear legislation that lays out how internet providers can and can't manipulate internet traffic, split partisan control of Capitol Hill isn't likely to lead to much compromise this year,

analysts say. "It's conceivable that Congress will settle net neutrality once and for all in the next 18 months, but I'm skeptical," said Paul Gallant, a telecom industry analyst at Cowen & Co.

And with some politicians already gearing up for 2020 presidential runs, what has become an intensely partisan issue among Democratic and Republican lawmakers could continue to divide them. Surveys show that most average Americans aren't that far apart on net neutrality. But that hasn't prevented some from trying to widen the gap. In October, the Justice Department revealed — in a 38-page indictment against an accused Russian disinformation operative — that foreign attempts to meddle in U.S. elections included efforts to use net neutrality as a wedge. — *Washington Post*

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The nation's 911 service shouldn't fail because of one company's troubles. That, however, is exactly what happened last Friday, and while there have thus far been no reports of people dying because they couldn't contact emergency services, the failure shouldn't be lost in the fog of the long holiday weekend. The nation's telecommunications companies and the federal government should both be held accountable for the failure and the slow rollout of upgrades to the nationwide 911 system.

For those who may have already forgotten, internet service provided by telecommunications giant CenturyLink crashed sometime late Thursday. The outage first knocked out mobile 911 service in parts of Washington state before cascading eastward. Later that night, 911 outages were reported in parts of Missouri, Idaho and Arizona. (While the problem didn't affect landline phones, it's worth noting fewer than half of American households still have a functioning landline.)

By Friday morning, it was becoming clear the problem was also affecting Massachusetts. Early that morning, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency confirmed that there were several local 911 outages, including on the North Shore, telling anyone facing an emergency to call the business line for their local department.

Quick: What's the business telephone number for your local department? We're guessing you don't know. Local emergency providers weren't sure if they were missing calls. In Manchester, for example, cell phone calls to the police weren't making it through, dispatcher Chelsie Reilly told reporter Ray Lamont. Test mobile calls to the station, she said, were answered by a message indicating "all circuits are busy."

In Washington, D.C., Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai called the outage "completely unacceptable." "Its breadth and duration are particularly troubling," he said, promising the commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau will investigate the cause and effect of the outage. While the breakdown is indeed troubling, it should not be surprising. So-called "sunny day" outages -- where outages are caused by human error or other factors, and not the weather -- are becoming increasingly common.

In 2014, for example, T-Mobile was fined \$17.5 million for two separate 911 outages that the FCC said were preventable. The outages lasted more than three hours and affected all of T-Mobile's clients. Also in 2014, another CenturyLink outage, this one lasting six hours, affected

more than 10 million people in Washington, Minnesota, and North Carolina. The company paid \$16 million in fines. And just this past June, AT&T agreed to pay \$5.25 million to resolve investigations into two 911 service outages in 2017. Those interruptions lasted five hours and led to 15,000 failed calls. An FCC report on the issue put the blame squarely on the company: "The outage was caused by an error that likely could have been avoided had AT&T implemented checks with respect to their critical 911 network assets," the FCC said in its report. Routine attention would have prevented the outage altogether, the agency noted.

In almost every case, FCC investigators found the telecoms were simply not performing routing checkups or adequate maintenance. "This outage could have been prevented," Pai said after the AT&T outage. "It was the result of mistakes made by AT&T. The bureau's report shows that there were shortfalls in operational redundancies, risk assessment and stakeholder and consumer outreach. Had AT&T followed certain best practices ... this outage would have had much less impact. Indeed, the cause of the outage could and should have been identified and addressed with periodic audits of the network."

It's obvious the fines aren't doing enough to bring the telecommunications companies into line. It's clear heftier levies are needed. But the government bears some of the blame, having been slow to introduce the so-called Next Generation 911 system, which upgrades the nationwide system with multiple backups. That's the kind of infrastructure investment President Trump and his counterparts in Congress have long said is needed. It must happen now. — **Salem (MA) News editorial**

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Spencer Neumann, who [on Wednesday](#) was named Netflix Inc.'s new finance chief, joins the video streaming service at a critical juncture in its evolution. His main objective in the top finance post, analysts say, will be clear from the start: Wrestle with a cash-sucking content development pipeline while convincing investors that efforts to convert original content into more subscriptions and profits ultimately will materialize.

Co-founder and Chief Executive Reed Hastings and Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos, who have driven transformation away from a licensing-heavy model in an attempt to fend off competitors such as Amazon.com Inc., Hulu LLC and AT&T Inc.'s HBO, will continue to set business and content strategy. Mr. Neumann's job "is to make sure that the financial engine can support their vision," said Neil Macker, a senior equity analyst with Morningstar Inc.

Mr. Neumann, who joins Netflix from videogame maker Activision Blizzard Inc., was previously a longtime Walt Disney Co. executive who held roles at both Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Worldwide Inc. and the company's ABC Television Network unit. Netflix declined to make Mr. Neumann available for comment. The move to create more original content has led to a funding gap at Netflix. It takes roughly two years to get a new show from production to screen, and Netflix's investment is tied up for that period with no returns, analysts say. As a result, while the company's earnings and profit margins have grown, it has spent cash more quickly than its operations can replace.

Netflix's spending also has increased as it lured away talented showrunners, including "Glee" producer Ryan Murphy and "Grey's Anatomy" creator Shonda Rhimes. Mr. Neumann's main objective will be "to instill confidence that this growth is going to translate to cash generation in a few years and a self-funding company," said Matthew Thornton, an analyst with investment bank SunTrust Robinson Humphrey Inc. Netflix in October said it expects to have negative cash flow of \$3 billion in 2018, with roughly the same figure in 2019. The company expects material improvements in 2020.

For now, Netflix has plugged the increase in working capital by turning to the debt market, a move that has concerned some investors, analysts say. Mr. Neumann will need to monitor the company's growing debt and determine what is a sustainable debt load in an environment of rising interest rates, said Mr. Macker of Morningstar. Recent pressure on the company's stock price adds to the complexity of this balancing act. Netflix previously said it could shoulder a capital structure that is up to 20% to 25% debt, but a decline in the value of its stock could change that calculus, Mr. Macker said. Netflix shares, which closed flat on Wednesday at \$267.66, were down 29% from three months ago.

Mr. Neumann succeeds longtime Netflix finance chief David Wells, who in August announced plans to resign after 14 years with the company, eight of them as CFO. Mr. Neumann was most recently finance chief at Santa Monica, Calif.-based Activision Blizzard, which on Monday said it would fire him for a reason unrelated to the company's financials.

An Activision Blizzard spokeswoman declined to comment beyond the company's press release and filing. A Netflix spokesman declined to comment but pointed to the company's statement on Mr. Neumann's appointment. "Spencer is a stellar entertainment executive and we're thrilled that he will help us provide amazing stories to people all over the world," Mr. Hastings said in the statement. An executive dismissed for cause typically forfeits whatever earned but not vested equity and other severance they were due to receive, lawyers and recruiters said.

For Mr. Neumann, that figure could be substantial, recruiters said. Mr. Neumann joined the videogame maker in May 2017 under a contract that was due to expire in April 2020, according to a regulatory filing. The contract included a \$14 million equity grant that would vest in four installments over four years, and could be worth as much as \$23 million, depending on company performance. Mr. Neumann's compensation also included a \$2 million signing bonus that fully vested in May 2018. — **Wall Street Journal**

