

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
[Lawmakers, regulators grapple with data privacy](#)

LightReading
[How Comcast Will Use Blockchain Tech for Targeted Ads](#)

New York Times
[YouTube Moves to Make Conspiracy Videos Harder to Find](#)

Zap2It
[Cable Top 25 for Week Ending January 20](#)

Pittsburgh City Paper
[State Rep. Sara Innamorato wants every eligible Pennsylvania voter automatically registered](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer
[Pa. Senate Democrats reviewing complaint about State Sen. Daylin Leach](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer
[State representative from Western Pa. under investigation for alleged assault](#)

Pennlive
[Gov. Tom Wolf calls on two legislators accused of sexual misconduct to resign](#)

Allegheny Township Police are warning residents of unsolicited phone calls from someone falsely claiming residents are eligible for a phone service upgrade. Police say someone claiming to be a representative of AT&T called a township resident recently and tried to scam them into releasing credit card information. The bogus caller can use accurate names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. They pitch a phone service upgrade and ask for an installation fee to be paid via credit card. Residents should call Allegheny Township police at 724-845-9410 or their telephone service provider to report suspicious calls. Township police warn residents to never give out credit card numbers to anyone claiming to be a vendor over the phone without verifying their authenticity. – **Pittsburgh Tribune-Review**

A Virginia lawmaker is trying to get rid of the annoying spam calls that pop up on your caller ID and appear to be from a familiar phone number. You've heard the term before, [spoofing](#), and now legislation has been introduced to make it illegal in Virginia. Del. Todd Pillion (R – Abingdon) said [HB 2564](#) would add the practice of spoofing to the Virginia Telephone Privacy Protection Act. "The measure also prohibits a person, with such intent, from displaying (a) Virginia area code on the recipient's caller identification system unless the person making, placing, or initiating the call or text message maintains a physical presence in the Commonwealth," the bill reads. It would lead to a \$500 fine.

It's the number one consumer complaint to the Federal Communications Commission with more than 200,000 illegal robocall complaints a year. These spoofed calls are already illegal when they are trying to defraud, cause harm or obtain anything of value from you, but spoofing itself is currently not illegal. The FCC's number one piece of advice is if you don't recognize the number, do not answer. If you do answer, hang up immediately. Do not press any numbers if you are asked. Call your phone service provider for anything it may offer to cut off the unwanted call. – **WJAC-TV, Lynchburg VA**

The world's biggest tech firms have a message for the world's policy makers and business leaders: We're changing our ways. Companies including Facebook Inc., Alphabet Inc.'s Google, Microsoft Corp. and Amazon.com Inc., are facing a growing [backlash against their increasing size and power](#). Over the past year, politicians, consumers and even business partners have raised concerns about the companies' scale, their handling of users' personal information and the potential for artificial intelligence to destroy jobs and distort decisions.

This week at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, some tech execs are responding that many critics have a point—saying they have a greater responsibility to mitigate the dangers of their own creations. "There is a lot of angst and anxiety about the tech companies, the power of the tech companies," Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg told a packed audience in Davos this week. "There's a phase right now of really being worried about the harms, and a lot of those are legitimate, and we need to do a better job."

It is a big shift in tone from a few years ago. For years, tech executives met with business leaders and government officials here in Davos and other venues, projecting unbridled confidence that their technologies were making the world a more open, prosperous place. Now, while maintaining their optimism that tech is a force for good, companies are embracing the idea of new regulations and talking about greater social obligations. “With scale, we do have an appreciation that we have a greater sense of responsibility, responsibility to the communities in which we operate,” Ruth Porat, Alphabet Inc.’s chief financial officer, said during a panel discussion this week. “How do you make sure that technology really is a democratizing force? That’s one of the areas where we’re spending a lot of time.”

While tech companies say they face stiff competition in many sectors in which they operate, their size has been a major topic for business leaders this week. Technology-stock declines have taken a bite out of the firms’ vertiginous valuations, but the backlash probably isn’t over for the most powerful companies, says Jacqueline Hunt, head of asset management and U.S. life insurance for Allianz SE , Europe’s largest insurer. “Undoubtedly when you look at the dominance of some of the players, they built that position by meeting a consumer need, which is admirable in many ways,” Ms. Hunt said in an interview. “But I think increasingly people are saying their sheer size, and their sheer global reach, is potentially precluding others from entering the market.”

Advertisers also express concerns about the size of Google and Facebook, which together are projected to pull in nearly 52% of worldwide spending in the digital-advertising market in 2019, according to eMarketer. Buyers say they two companies are both very effective places to spend money, but that they wish there were more large competitors to choose from—and play off against each other. “They deserve the position they have earned, but they may be too big,” said Maurice Levy, chairman of advertising company Publicis Groupe SA, in an interview. “Some clients are a little worried because they like being in control of their money.”

Control over data is another concern. David McKay, CEO of Royal Bank of Canada, Canada’s largest bank by market capitalization, says tech companies’ data on banking customers is one of the industry’s biggest long-range challenges. Increasingly, “they have greater insight into our customers’ lives than we do,” Mr. McKay said. Tech companies have become increasingly responsive, however, when it comes to government requests to remove extremist content, said Catherine De Bolle, executive director of Europol, the European Union police agency. “In 85% of cases, the private sector does what we ask” without demanding further information, she said.

Meanwhile, technology executives have also become more vocal in the potential risks of the artificial intelligence technologies they are developing—such as the potential for facial-recognition software to help power a surveillance state. This week, for instance, Google published a white paper with recommendations on AI governance, including how to ensure that AI makes fair decisions, and who should be liable when it makes mistakes. “As creators of AI we need to have a set of design principles that govern fairness, robustness, privacy, security, accountability,” Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in an

interview. "Those would be things that without those checks, we would have a dystopian world."

The change in tone has been particularly stark at Facebook. The company has been lambasted, particularly over the last year, for being too slow to stem problems like election interference, posts blamed for spurring violence, and the improper harvesting of users' data by outside companies. In Davos this year, it fitted its two-story meeting space with flat screens touting how the company is tackling its problems, such as by increasing the number of people to work on safety and security to 30,000, including 15,000 content moderators. Ms. Sandberg has pressed that message, saying the company is now spending billions of dollars a year on security. "We have a very fundamentally different approach to running the company," Ms. Sandberg said on stage. "We know we need to earn back trust. And that means we need to prove it." — ***Wall Street Journal; also in New York Times, Mark Zuckerberg to integrate Messenger, Instagram and WhatsApp***

The field for the special election in West Philly's 190th state House District is set. For now. Democratic leaders of the seven wards in the district on Saturday selected Darryl Thomas as their candidate. Two Democrats not selected, Amen Brown and Pastor Pam Williams, collected enough signatures on nomination petitions to get on the March 12 ballot. Michael Harvey is the Republican nominee.

Friday is the deadline to file legal challenges to a candidate's eligibility. And all eyes appear to be on Thomas, a barber who ran unsuccessfully in the 2016 primary for the 190th District. Thomas lists as his address a Powelton rowhouse he sold nearly four years ago to a woman described by his campaign as his girlfriend. Records from the Delaware Department of Elections show Thomas was registered to vote in that state from 2001 until 2017 at an address in Bear. Thomas, who is listed on the deed to that property, said it is his mother's home. He insists he never voted in Delaware. That state's records list him as doing so in 2002 and 2010.

Philadelphia voting records show Thomas casting ballots in most elections here for more than a decade. Together, the records show Thomas voting in the 2010 general election in Philadelphia and in Delaware, something he also denied. "We don't believe he voted in the same election twice," said William Dunbar, Thomas' campaign manager. "That would be voter fraud." The 190th District seat is open because former State Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, a Democrat, resigned in December after being convicted on bribery charges. Sonte Reavis, a lawyer, had been considered a front-runner for the Democratic nomination until **Clout last week raised questions** about whether he lived in the district. — ***Philadelphia Daily News***



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