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A judge's approval of T-Mobile US Inc.'s takeover of Sprint Corp. will usher in a new balance of power in the U.S. wireless market and test whether three giants will compete as aggressively for cellphone users as four unequal players once did.

U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero concluded the deal, worth $26 billion when it was struck two years ago, wasn't likely to substantially lessen competition, and rejected the main arguments by a group of states seeking to block the deal as anticompetitive. "T-Mobile has redefined itself over the past decade as a maverick that has spurred the two largest players in its industry to make numerous pro-consumer changes," **the judge wrote**, adding that a closed deal would allow it to continue "T-Mobile's undeniably successful business strategy for the foreseeable future."

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York Dispatch
York County GOP holds big advantage ahead of April primary elections

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Editorial: Redistricting reform – Time running out to create citizens commission

Judge Marrero rejected the states' argument that Sprint, without the deal, could continue competing. He also said a deal brokered by federal regulators to set up Dish Network Corp. as a new cellular phone service provider would benefit consumers.

The opinion will leave most of the country's wireless customers with three major network operators: Verizon Communications Inc., AT&T Inc. and the new T-Mobile. New entrant Dish plans to use the deal as a springboard for its mobile ambitions, while U.S. cable companies are stuck with existing providers' networks for their fledgling cellular services. Shares of all the companies advanced in premarket trading Tuesday after The Wall Street Journal first **reported Monday on the expected verdict**, a sign that investors expect the consolidation will boost industry profits.

The verdict is a defeat for the group of 13 states and the District of Columbia that challenged the deal, an unusual state lawsuit against a combination blessed by federal regulators. The U.S. Justice Department and Federal Communications Commission **approved the combination last year** after they secured concessions from T-Mobile and Sprint, but a coalition of Democratic-led states remained unconvinced. The case went to trial in December.

Judge Marrero said the states brought a case that appeared strong and might have been enough to warrant a merger injunction in other industries. But he said the fast-changing wireless sector was different. The judge was convinced both by testimony from Sprint executives that the struggling carrier was falling behind, despite what he described as "valiant attempts" to remain competitive, and from Dish that it would be able to operate a viable new carrier. He also acknowledged the effort the FCC and Justice Department put into crafting a fourth nationwide carrier run by Dish. The agreement requires Sprint to sell airwaves and about nine million customer accounts to Dish.

T-Mobile and Sprint have spent more than seven years pursuing a combination in some form. They abandoned previous attempts in 2013 and 2017 before their boards **struck an agreement in early 2018** that would allow T-Mobile to take over its smaller rival, creating a company closer in size to Verizon and AT&T. Absorbing Sprint crowns a dramatic come-from-behind win for T-Mobile, which struggled to consistently gain market share a decade ago. Under Chief Executive John Legere, the Bellevue, Wash., company bounced back from a failed union with AT&T in 2011 and eventually surpassed Sprint in the race for the most subscribers. Its purchase of most Sprint customer accounts will put the company in second behind Verizon.

T-Mobile's hand will be strengthened by a massive stockpile of wireless radio licenses held by Sprint. Those spectrum holdings allow the new company to serve more customers with high-speed internet service on the go, putting pressure on AT&T and Verizon to match them as carriers upgrade to faster fifth-generation, or 5G, standards. The states might decide to appeal the ruling and another U.S. district judge in Washington must approve the existing Justice Department arrangement. The cellphone companies also **need clearance from California's Public Utilities Commission**. But the merger partners' position is strengthened by their federal court victory. – ***Wall Street Journal***

Governor Tom Wolf is renewing his calls for his Restore Pennsylvania plan to be passed through the Legislature. The proposal was first introduced about a year ago and hasn't moved since. Restore PA calls for $4.5 billion to be put toward repairing and increasing infrastructure across Pennsylvania. Although it's received opposition from GOP lawmakers, Governor Wolf feels the plan could pass today if called for a vote. "If it were brought up for a vote, it would pass. We have 95 co-sponsors in the House, 23 in the Senate, it would pass overwhelmingly," Governor Wolf says.

The controversial part of Restore PA is how the plan would be funded. The $4.5 billion dollars would be borrowed, then repaid through a severance tax on the natural gas industry. It's a provision many House and Senate GOP lawmakers aren't on board with, according to spokespeople in both chambers. Jennifer Kocher, Communication Director for the Senate GOP, says: "This is a reread of his previous failed proposal and there hasn't been anything new that would change our position. We are more interested in creating an environment for job creation than levying a new tax on the job creators. We do not support a severance tax and that's the basis for this proposal."

Mike Straub is the Spokesman for the House GOP. He says members are against taking on more debt and imposing a severance tax on the natural gas industry is not the way to go. "While improving Pennsylvania's aging infrastructure is a shared goal, it cannot come at the expense of the Commonwealth's taxpayers and economy. The Governor's call to borrow at least $4 billion and then create a tax on the gas industry to pay it back is the wrong move. The gas industry already pays the impact fee, and according to the IFO, 2019's collection on the impact fee will be an all-time high.

Since 2012, the impact fee has generated nearly $1.7 billion, and that money is already used for a variety of projects from road maintenance, sewer upgrades, parks, flood control, etc. Plus, on top of the fee, gas producers also pay every other state tax, corporate and personal income, capital stock and franchise, sales and use, liquid fuels, etc. In the last 8 years, the industry has already paid more than $2.5 billion on top of the impact fee. At the heart of it is the increased debt. Many of our members have a hard time taking on $4 billion in new debt, creating a tax to pay it back, and hoping the revenue will still be there over 20 years to pay off the debt. We look forward to working within our existing budget to finding infrastructure solutions," Straub said in a statement.

Despite the opposition, Governor Wolf remains optimistic. "This is something Republicans, Democrats, local communities all over Pennsylvania are crying for this," Governor Wolf explains. He also maintains the severance tax is the best road to take, even calling the provision "common-sense." "Here we have the chance to take our own natural resource, use the funding from that to make our Commonwealth better," Governor Wolf says. "I haven't had a borough or city council say 'I don't think this is a good idea.' They want it, and I think that's how we get the state Legislature to go along with this," he adds.

Restore PA would repair rural roads, remove blight, and increase broadband access across the state. It would also help communities

prepare for flooding and other disastrous weather, and set up a relief fund to help pay for repairs not covered by insurance. The plan also calls for the remediation of brownfield sites, and help neutralize pollution threats from legacy pollution sites.

Cabinet officials are echoing the Governor's calls to get Restore PA passed soon. "This is our chance to really set up a Pennsylvania that's really geared toward the future, that's really going to make Pennsylvania the place that is thriving in economy, thriving in quality of life, and the place we all want to live, work, and play," says Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary of the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources. "We have the ability to help, we have the formula and funding to do it. So let's not make Pennsylvania wait any longer. Pass Restore Pennsylvania, so we can make sure that no matter where you live, Pennsylvania is a place where we can work smart and live happy," says Dennis Davin, Secretary of the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development.

There are several Republicans cosponsoring Restore PA legislation. But as long as the severance tax provision is included, the future of the plan remains in limbo, -- ***WICU-TV, Erie***

Characterized as a pro-active approach, Lower Macungie Township (Lehigh Co.) has become the first Lehigh Valley municipality to enact zoning guidelines for 5G wireless distributed antennas. The ordinance was adopted during Thursday night's board of commissioners meeting by a 4-0 vote. It was the culmination of more than 18 months of legal research, discussions with industry representatives and several rounds of revisions, according to Nathan Jones, the township's director of planning.

In essence, the guidelines will control the size, placement, construction and maintenance of wireless communications towers and antennas. The move allows the township to get ahead of the issue, according to Jones. Commissioners had identified 5G legislation as a priority as early as 2017. Commissioners attempted to balance the convenience of an upgraded technology framework, while still addressing residents' concerns of improved performance and marginalized visual eyesores.

During 2018, the Federal Communications Commission removed several regulatory barriers to infrastructure development. It was also significant because it nationalized public infrastructure for 5G installation. Lower Macungie's guidelines are in compliance with FCC rules, even though some aspects of the 2018 law are being challenged in court. – ***WFMZ-TV, Allentown***

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