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Pennsylvanians later this year may see their 911 phone bill surcharge rise to \$2 a month to address a funding crunch emergency dispatch centers are facing. The current monthly fee on landline phones is \$1.25. Wireless and VoIP customers pay \$1 a month.

Legislation is expected to be introduced later this month to increase the surcharge and make other 911-related reforms. The landline surcharge "has not changed since 1990 and is vastly inadequate to deal with the costs of the system," said Douglas Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.



In calling for the new \$2 surcharge, Hill pointed to escalating 911 costs driven by rapid changes in phone technology and higher call volumes. With costs outpacing surcharge revenue, county taxpayers have been making up the difference. In Lancaster County last year, for example, the surcharges funded only 56 percent of the 911 center's \$9.3-million budget, said Kristene

Erdman with Lancaster County-Wide Communications. Adding urgency to the funding crisis is the scheduled June 30 expiration of the current \$1-a-month wireless surcharge. The lapse of that revenue would put a \$2.5-million hole in Lancaster County's 911 budget.

The Lancaster County commissioners Wednesday passed a resolution favoring an increase in 911 subscriber fees "to a level that fully supports current and next generation operations." "When people call 911, they want a response," commissioner Craig Lehman said. "What we're trying to do is make sure that we have the resources to continue to provide that excellent service." "It's critical after all this time that we have a comprehensive rewrite" of the state's 911 law, commissioner Scott Martin said. If allowed to rise with inflation, the \$1 surcharge enacted in 1990 would be \$1.81 today.

But inflation alone is not responsible for emergency call centers' higher costs. They have upgraded for technology including cell and satellite phones, crash and intruder notification systems and Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP. Next generation technology will allow 911 operators to respond to text messages, photos and video. Hill said legislative committees will begin considering a reform bill later this month. – *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal*

The Obama administration believes the Internet needs fixing, and that they're just the folks to do it.

And how is the bureaucracy that brought you Obamacare going to improve the world's

entrepreneurial engine, exactly? By regulating it like a Great Depression-era utility, of course.

President Barack Obama says the Federal Communications Commission needs to “implement the strongest possible rules” so Internet service providers can’t connect customers to some websites — primarily hugely popular ones, such as Google, Netflix and Facebook — more quickly than others. Last week, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler gave fellow commissioners copies of proposed “net neutrality” rules that would reclassify the Internet as a public utility. The regulations, part of the president’s go-it-alone approach to governance, would do an end-around Congress by applying President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1934 Communications Act to the Internet with the same level of control applied to the old Ma Bell monopoly.

Mr. Wheeler, a former telecom lobbyist and one of the president’s leading fundraisers in 2008 and 2012, previously had pushed back on the president’s wishes, preferring more of a “hybrid approach” that would tighten the reins on broadband service providers while giving them plenty of room to enter paid prioritization agreements. The rules introduced last week, however, are much more aggressive than what Mr. Wheeler proposed early last year and are very much in line with President Obama’s wishes. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., is chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, one of two congressional committees now investigating whether the White House improperly influenced Mr. Wheeler. Sen. Johnson sent the FCC chairman a letter asking him to explain his decision, as well as produce communication and meeting documents related to the issue.

Also among those speaking out is Ajit Pai, one of two Republican FCC commissioners. When President Obama first floated his ideas on net neutrality, Mr. Pai expressed concern that the president’s plan would needlessly limit broadband investment, reduce competition among Internet service providers, slow the speed and expansion of the World Wide Web and choke off Internet access to rural areas of the country. After receiving a copy of Mr. Wheeler’s proposal, Mr. Pai said the plan “marks a monumental shift toward government control of the Internet” that “gives the FCC the power to micromanage virtually every aspect of how the Internet works.” “The plan explicitly opens the door to billions of dollars in new taxes on broadband,” he said. “These new taxes will mean higher prices for consumers and more hidden fees that they have to pay.”

He added that the plan “saddles small, independent businesses and entrepreneurs with heavy-handed regulations that will push them out of the market” and, as a result, “Americans will have fewer broadband choices.” If all this isn’t bad enough, it gets worse: The public isn’t allowed to review the proposed rules. Mr. Wheeler has prohibited the disclosure of any of the regulations until *after* the FCC votes on it later this month. Americans were promised the most transparent administration in history. Now the FCC will have to pass the rules so we can find out what’s in them. We all know how this is going to turn out. Do you want Washington to do to your Internet access what it did to your health insurance? If not, tell the FCC to back off. — **Las Vegas Review-Journal editorial**

The 332 pages of new regulations for the Internet, revealed last week by the Federal Communications Commission, demonstrate vividly how a federal bureaucracy, if left alone without proper supervision, puts obstacles in the way of the economic sector. It’s instinctive. The instinct to impose bureaucratic harm is exacerbated when an agency feels the pressure of an overzealous White House.

Net neutrality divides Washington policymakers. Some liberals see net neutrality as a fundamental issue of taking partisan control of the Internet that resonates with their constituents. Republicans say that the fully functioning Internet has created a robust marketplace that needs no drastic changes. Most of all, the Internet must not be

changed from a Title I information service, under the Telecommunications Act, to a Title II telecommunications public utility, subject to thousands of initiative-killing regulations. President Obama, to no one's surprise, supports making the change.

But even as the FCC moves to make this fundamental change, it struggles to justify the change to Congress and the public. Robert McDowell, a former FCC commissioner, continues to say loud, clear and persuasively, how this supposedly "independent agency" has never once produced a peer-reviewed study showing harm to anyone by the Internet as it stands. The new regulations are a solution in search of a problem.

Beyond the substance of heavy-handed regulations to disrupt the Internet and increase costs for American consumers, lies a deeply troubling political fact: The FCC, an agency under the explicit watch of Congress, not the White House, exhibits rogue tendencies encouraging mission creep. Misbehaving in defiance of Congress is par for the Obama administration, and the new net neutrality rules to take effect Feb. 26 will encourage more bad behavior.

Over the past months, the FCC in defiance of its own rules issued favorable rulings to please certain wireless carriers at the expense of others, worked to upend years of work by state legislatures to prevent costly and largely unworkable municipal broadband networks, and, in pushing net neutrality, disregards the hard work of Congress and the two Republican commissioners of the FCC. The agency is now under investigation by both the House and Senate for its peculiar behavior, seizure of power and authority it is not entitled to, and has colluded with the White House to make fundamental changes.

It shouldn't be this way. In coming to the table with legislation including the deep concessions and strong consumer protections liberals have asked for, Sen. John Thune of South Dakota and Reps. Fred Upton of Michigan and Greg Walden of Oregon reached out to Democrats in Congress to resolve their differences over how the FCC should be required to fulfill its mission. By ignoring the attempt to compromise, the Democrats in Congress and the three Democrats on the commission show their hand. The debate over how to protect the Internet was never about preventing abuse by Internet providers and protecting those who use its power and convenience, but whether the federal government, through the FCC, would expand the government's "oversight" and take an open Internet away from the people.

The FCC is out of control, determined to use the agency to force President Obama's transformative agenda — the one he can't get through Congress — into the lives of all Americans. — **Washington Times opinion**

Philadelphia has been selected to host the 2016 Democratic National Convention, DNC chair Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz announced this morning. The city, along with Columbus and Brooklyn, was among the three finalists for the event, which will take place the week of July 25, 2016. "In addition to their commitment to a seamless and safe convention, Philadelphia's deep rooted place in American history provides a perfect setting for this special gathering," Wasserman Schultz said in a statement. The DNC evaluated cities on factors that included transportation, security, finances, logistics and hotel capacity.

City leaders had aggressively wooed the selection committee, touting the city's vibrancy, history, landmarks, transit and hotel capacity. The city had also sought to assure the selection committee it could line up the funding necessary for the convention, and that the announced mayoral candidates were as supportive of hosting the event as current Mayor Michael Nutter. "The City of Philadelphia is excited and honored to be selected as the host city for the 2016 Democratic National Convention," Nutter said in a statement Thursday. "We believe that it was our proven track record of hosting big events safely and efficiently with a dynamic team of top-tier professionals to organize and manage a conference of this magnitude, paired with our City's tremendous

amenities, its accessible location and historical significance, which made Philadelphia the ideal choice for the 2016 DNC." Philadelphia hosted the Republicans' convention in 2000.

Gov. Tom Wolf sounds pretty excited that the 2016 Democratic National Convention will be in Philadelphia. Wolf released a statement of support Thursday morning after an anonymous source told CNN about the event taking place in the City of Brotherly Love.

"Today's announcement is tremendous news for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," Wolf said in a prepared statement. "The birthplace of our democracy will host the Democratic National Convention in 2016, which will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity in the state." Wolf added that, "We look forward to working with local leaders to ensure that Philadelphia will shine in the national spotlight." – [philly.com](#); [pennlive.com](#); more in [Politico](#)



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