

# UNCAPPED POTENTIAL CABLE ACADEMY 2017

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BCAP's 29<sup>th</sup> annual Cable Academy heads to the Poconos to highlight the direction our industry must embrace to prosper during the most competitive environment in its history. Cable Academy 2017 will showcase the "Uncapped Potential" that exists today, and how it can further expand in the near future.

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NewsClips

February 13,  
2017

**Current Spectrum auction nets nearly \$35M for two Pennsylvania stations; more in Hazleton Standard-Speaker**

**West Chester Daily Local News PECO kicks off annual inspection of utility poles**

**Minneapolis Star-Tribune Broadband is still the missing link in rural Minnesota**

As President Trump rushes to dismantle Obama-era rules that protect Americans, he has an energetic helper over at the Federal Communications Commission. Its new Republican chairman has started **undoing policies** of his predecessor that were intended to make phone, cable and internet service more fair and more affordable.

Ajit Pai, who was a commissioner before he became chairman last month, is trying to wipe away net neutrality rules put in place by Tom Wheeler, the former chairman, to prevent broadband companies from creating fast and slow lanes on the internet. Mr. Pai has scrapped a proposal to let people buy cable-TV boxes instead of renting them at inflated prices from companies like Comcast. Many of Mr. Pai's moves would hurt the people who have the least power. For instance, he has backed away from rules to lower the exorbitant rates for prison phone calls. And he has suspended nine companies from providing **discounted internet service** to poor people through a program known as Lifeline.

Mr. Pai, who says the Wheeler-era regulations are burdensome, clearly favors policies that serve the interests of large telecommunications companies. Consider the net neutrality rules, which were put in place to prevent broadband companies from giving preferential treatment to content from their affiliates or business partners. Because only one or two cable and phone companies provide high-speed internet access to homes in most of the country, they can easily impose abusive policies without fear of losing customers.

[Bloomberg Facebook Tries to Offer Music Labels an Alternative to YouTube](#)

[pennlive.com Gov. Tom Wolf releases consultant's report that helped him craft his 2017-18 budget proposal](#)

[pennlive.com Charlie Gerow op-ed: Good luck trying to take re-election politics out of Gov. Wolf's budget plan](#)

[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Uncertainty over Obamacare's future makes it harder to plan Pennsylvania's budget](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer Voters in this Philly neighborhood remain all in for Trump](#)

Those businesses have tried to use their power as internet gatekeepers to demand that streaming companies like Netflix pay them fees to deliver movies and TV shows to people who are already

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paying for broadband. The regulations were **upheld last year** by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. If Mr. Pai now scraps them, he will be helping big telecom companies at the expense of internet users and smaller companies without the deep pockets to pay broadband providers.

Mr. Pai wants cable companies to keep making a mint from renting cable boxes — a revenue stream that totals **nearly \$20 billion a year**. He seems unconcerned that families across the country are being forced to spend an average of \$231 a year on those fees, when they would save money over the long run if they were allowed to buy the boxes just as they purchase other electronic devices. In fact, Congress directed the F.C.C. to do just that. Yet the commission is ignoring that law and allowing this scheme to continue.

Mr. Pai is aiming right at the poor with his policies on prison phone rates and discounted broadband service.

Phone companies filed a lawsuit challenging rules adopted during Mr. Wheeler's tenure to cap prison phone rates, which had been as high as **\$17 for a 15-minute phone call**. There is simply no justification for those rates. And by suspending companies seeking to offer discounted broadband service through Lifeline, the F.C.C. will deprive children from poor households of the high-speed internet access they need to do homework. **Mr. Pai says** he is concerned about fraud and says the affected companies were not properly vetted. But this isn't the right way to root out abuse. The commission could, for example, subject companies participating in the program to regular audits.

**Congress created the F.C.C.** to help all Americans obtain access to communication services without discrimination and at fair prices. Mr. Pai's approach does exactly the opposite. — **New York Times**

No one likes the set-top box – not even Comcast CEO Brian Roberts, who recently called it “the bane” of Comcast's existence – so when news broke last week Comcast would allow cable subscribers to stream channels over Roku devices, considerable media fanfare followed. Then came the catch.

While streaming will be free in beta mode, customers who choose the Roku path as a way to avoid paying about \$10 a month for secondary or additional cable box will still have to ante up a \$7.45 fee

for each TV to access the app, CNET reports. If you're using the Roku box in place of a primary cable box, you'll get a whopping \$2.50 monthly credit, [Bloomberg reports](#). "It's gravy to them. You're already paying handsomely for the service. And now they're making you pay a second time," Gigi Sohn, previously a senior advisor to former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, told CNET.

Wheeler was a champion of set-top reforms, and proposed regulations that would require cable companies to let customers stream their service through an app — at no extra charge — instead of making them rely on just set-top boxes. Comcast, among other industry players, opposed the idea, and was likely pleased to hear that last week new FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, diametrically opposed to Wheeler's reforms, pulled the set-top box reform regulations from the FCC's list of items it can put up for a vote. The rollback of any potential set-top box reform is also good news for Arris, the hardware company that manufactures equipment, including the boxes, for Comcast.

Raymond James Analyst Simon Leopold wrote in a research note, which was *reported by Multichannel News*, that it's one of a handful of reasons the Georgia-based company, its analysts and investors shouldn't be concerned by Arris' stock tumbling last week. The financial incentive to use Roku over a box is minimal. Arris also makes both the next-generation X1 system — credited with helping Comcast report its best year for video subscription in a decade — and the wireless gateways necessary for the Roku streaming service to work. Adding it all up, Leopold says the company will be just fine.

"Most, including us, see the traditional set top box (STB) as challenged, but offset by the deployment of next generation IP gateways and media boxes along with infrastructure to support them, and today's release does not alter our view on the trajectory. The initiative does not alter ARRIS' trajectory that includes increased network & cloud and broadband sales while traditional STBs decline," *Multichannel* quotes Leopold as stating. — *Philadelphia Business Journal*

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Verizon says it will offer unlimited data plans for subscribers, several years after it joined competitors in backing away from bottomless data packages.

In a statement, the company said Sunday that with Verizon Unlimited, cellular users would get unlimited data use on smartphones and tablets, in addition to video streaming, hotspot and calls to Mexico and Canada. The plan, which launches on Monday, will cost \$80 for unlimited data, calls and texting or \$45 per line for four separate lines carrying the same features.

There was a catch, however: Verizon added that after 22 GB of data usage on any one line, the company might "prioritize usage behind other customers in the event of network congestion." Verizon also said it will maintain its existing data plans for those who didn't want unlimited data.

In 2011, Verizon Wireless ceased offering unlimited plans to new smartphone subscribers, and recently announced that unlimited customers using more than 200 GB of data per month would have to downgrade to limited plans or get disconnected.

The announcement was significant, as carriers have gradually made it costlier for subscribers to use unlimited data plans. Usage has spiked as smartphones and tablets became increasingly ubiquitous, with users moving away from consuming media and web surfing on traditional computers. AT&T still offers bottomless data but has hiked the cost for grandfathered plans, making it increasingly costly for data junkies. Starting in March, AT&T subscribers using unlimited data plans will pay \$40 per month.  
— **CNBC**

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Air-quality testing is underway Monday on the Senate side of the State Capitol, where someone had [broken in over the weekend and sprayed a fire extinguisher throughout the building](#). Some of that spray got into the ductworks, though, resulting in the Senate offices shutting down for the day on Monday. But Drew Crompton, chief of staff for Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati, said on Monday that unless some unusual results come back with the air-quality tests, he expects the offices to open once again on Tuesday.

Crompton said it appears that one man broke into the House side of the building through a window around 3 a.m. Sunday. He caused some damage to one office on the House side and made his way over to the Senate. While on the Senate side of the Capitol, Crompton said the individual, whose name has not yet been released, grabbed a fire extinguisher and sprayed it outside of the offices on several floors. The individual was spotted by building security, who contacted the Capitol Police. He was apprehended him a short time later.

Capitol Police referred questions to Troy Thompson, spokesman for the Department of General Services, who could not immediately be reached for comment. Crompton, however, said it does not appear that any one particular office was the target of the vandalism and it doesn't appear to be politically motivated. "It sounds like a random guy from all accounts," he said.

While there was no damage on the Senate side beyond the fire-extinguisher spray, some paintings were taken off of the walls by the Capitol's preservation team to make sure there's no damage. The House offices are open Monday. Crompton said his office will talk to the Capitol Police regarding security measures. Someone breaking in through a window is an issue, he said, but the individual had been spotted by security guards and was quickly apprehended while trying to flee the building, he pointed out. — *pennlive.com*



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