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A federal inspector general has agreed to investigate actions by federal regulators that might benefit Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc. in its efforts to buy Tribune Media Co., according to a top congressman who requested the probe. The probe could further complicate the government's review of the \$3.9 billion Sinclair-Tribune deal, which has already run into delays over questions about how the merged company will comply with legal limits on local-station ownership.

Reps. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the House Commerce Committee, and Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, wrote to the inspector general of the Federal Communications Commission in November, requesting the investigation. The two lawmakers say they are concerned that FCC Chairman Ajit Pai might have improperly colluded with Sinclair by timing rule changes on media ownership to help smooth the way for its takeover of Tribune. Among those changes, the lawmakers say, were an alteration in the formula used to calculate market share, and an easing of limits on the number of local stations that can be owned by the same group.

Mr. Pai's office said the charge of favoritism is "absurd," particularly given the agency's recent proposed \$13 million fine against Sinclair. Aides described the fine as the largest ever for a violation of the FCC's sponsorship identification rules. The inspector general's office didn't respond to requests for comment.

Sinclair's general counsel, Barry Faber, didn't respond to a request for comment. Sinclair has called the deal a transformational one that would make it into a leading national media platform. The Wall Street Journal reported in December that Justice Department antitrust officials believed the Sinclair-Tribune deal raised competition concerns in some markets but signaled they were willing to approve the deal if the companies sold off about a dozen stations. Those generally were in markets where [the combined company would own two of the top four stations](#).

The FCC eased that limit late last year, although it didn't go as far as broadcasters wanted, and still would require a waiver for common ownership of two top-four stations in a single market. The government and Sinclair haven't yet reached an agreement. A recent pushback of an informal

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deadline for action at the FCC has added a layer of uncertainty to the talks. In asking for the investigation, the Democratic lawmakers said the agency's actions in rolling back media-ownership limits in 2017 "have raised serious concerns" about whether Mr. Pai's actions comport with the agency's mandate to act independently. Mr. Pallone said Thursday that he was "grateful" that the inspector general took up the investigation. The probe was first reported by the New York Times.

The inspector-general investigation could give opponents of the Sinclair-Tribune deal additional ammunition to attack it. Free Press, a left-leaning media advocacy group, has called on Mr. Pai to recuse himself from further consideration of the merger until the investigation is complete. Free Press is also challenging some of the media-ownership rule changes in court. A spokesman for the FCC noted that Mr. Pai "has for many years called on the FCC to update its media-ownership regulations to match the realities of the modern marketplace," a spokesman said. "Considering the strong case for modernizing these rules, it's not surprising that those who disagree with him would prefer to do whatever they can to distract from the merits of the reforms that the FCC has adopted."

Critics of the merger say Sinclair shortchanges local news. Its local stations have a reputation for conservative leanings and that has added to liberal activists' criticism of the deal. The FCC paused its informal 180-day clock for its portion of the merger review in January. At the time, the agency said the pause was to allow Sinclair to consider how to address the issue of possible divestitures of some stations. The pause on the FCC's clock effectively means that the Justice Department is under no pressure to make a decision on the deal. Negotiations about the status of the merger are currently focused on the Justice Department, according to people familiar with the matter. Some opponents of the deal have argued that Sinclair would own so many stations after acquiring Tribune that it would effectively have national negotiation leverage with distributors, which would drive up prices for consumers. – *Wall Street Journal*

Google quietly ran a test of new technology to make it easier for 911 operators to locate cellphone callers, and 911 centers that participated said the results were promising. The nation's existing 911 system, which turns 50 this month, has struggled with the explosion of cellphones. The vast majority of 911 calls these days are made using a cellphone, but the location of the caller is hard to pinpoint. Federal regulators estimate shaving a minute off response times could save as many 10,000 lives each year. Google's test covered tens of thousands of 911 calls in several states during December and January. For a random sample of 911 callers using an Android smartphone, the devices' location data was sent directly to 911 call takers.

Normally, wireless carriers are responsible for delivering location information, but the estimated location is usually less accurate than the blue dot consumers see on apps like Google Maps. Public-safety officials have pressured tech giants like Alphabet Inc.'s Google and Apple Inc. in recent years to make their rich location data available to 911. Google conducted its trial with two companies that have connections into 911 centers, West Corp. and a startup called RapidSOS. RapidSOS said its portion of the trial involved about 50 911 centers covering some 2.4 million people in Texas, Tennessee and Florida. Location data in more than 80% of the 911 calls using Google's technology were more accurate than the carrier data in the first 30 seconds of a call, according to RapidSOS.

Google's data provided an average location estimate radius of 121 feet, RapidSOS said, while carrier data averaged 522 feet. Carrier data also took longer to reach 911 centers, the company said. The companies and West Corp. are expected to discuss the trials at a 911 industry conference this week. West declined to comment. 911 directors that participated in the trial said the technology is a major improvement. "There was a big difference," said Jennifer Estes, 911 Director in Tennessee's Loudon County, about 30 miles southwest of Knoxville.

In one instance, dispatchers were able to send help to a caller who didn't speak English, Ms. Estes said. Without the accurate data, "we would have had to keep working with her to figure out where she was," she added. "In an emergency, obviously, seconds save lives." Bob Finney III, director of communications for the Collier County Sheriff's Office in south Florida, said the pilot helped solve a different problem: People who are so flustered during an emergency that they inadvertently tell 911 operators the wrong location. "We can validate what the caller is saying," Mr. Finney said. "We've never been able to do that because it's never been good enough."

The trial wasn't without hiccups. Emergency calls during the trial were supposed to include data from both wireless carriers and Google, but about 50,000 calls failed to include the carrier data, Google said. The glitch was identified by AT&T Inc., which was unaware the trial was going on, people familiar with the matter said, and Google modified its pilot after the problem was discovered. Google's location technology is currently active in 14 countries, primarily in Europe. Google has said it hopes to deploy the technology broadly across the U.S. sometime this

year. Apple, which has said it would activate similar technology in other countries, declined to comment about its plans for the U.S. – *Wall Street Journal*

We're less than a week in, but NBC already has 32 million reasons to believe its digital strategy for coverage of the 2018 Winter Olympics is paying off. That's the number of Snapchat users who watched NBC-partnered coverage of the Olympics so far on the platform, according to data from Snapchat parent company Snap Inc. The network is on pace to demolish viewership of 2016's Rio Games on Snapchat, which reached 35 million unique viewers over 18 days. NBC says its Olympic content on Snapchat generates revenue in the eight figures and doesn't eat into television viewership. But cord-cutting and TV ratings declines are increasingly a reality, so Snapchat at least offers a way to build hype for the Olympics among younger viewers and get them to sample the coverage. Snap says "well over" 90% of the audience watching NBC-partnered content is younger than 35, and NBC says that consumption of the Olympics on all platforms is [actually up](#). – *Wall Street Journal*

It's been a little while since we've heard from Milton Street, the state senator-turned-federal inmate-turned-mayoral candidate-turned-Uber driver. We started to wonder what kind of shenanigans he's been up to lately. After all, this is the same guy who once warned that the city couldn't simply "stretch a net across the sky, catch meteorites and sell sky rocks" in order to solve its fiscal woes. He's always got something going on.

Lo and behold, a post from Street's Facebook page started to make the rounds on social media earlier this week. "This is Senator T Milton Street," it read. "If someone can help me get (YUNG BERK) off my Facebook page I would appreciate it. I reported it to Facebook got no help." The name on Street's account, meanwhile, had been switched to "Berk Yung," and his [profile picture](#) was changed in January to a photo of a skinny young guy in a white T-shirt with low-slung jeans. Clearly, something was amiss. Had Street been hacked? Was Berk Yung related at all to Burt Young, the actor who played Adrian's boozy, baseball bat-clutching brother Paulie in *Rocky*?

The old phone number we had for Street was answered by a woman who explained that she was not Milton Street. We tried contacting his son, Milton Street Jr., but didn't get a response. Needless to say, Berk Young did not respond to our Facebook messages, either. So we're turning to you, devoted Clout reader, to help us solve these mysteries. Who is Berk Young? Where on Earth is Milton Street? Has he finally returned to his home planet? Send any and all tips to clout@phillynews.com. The first lucky emailer will receive a limited edition Clout refrigerator magnet, with a design drawn by none other than Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Signe Wilkinson. – *Philadelphia Daily News*

