

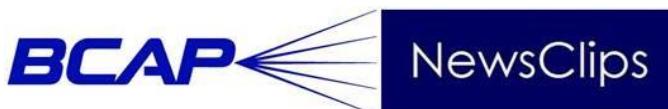
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February 25, 2020

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Both sides of the aisle seemed to applaud President Trump's pledge to ensure high-speed Internet access for every citizen, including those in rural America. And on the state level, governors are now talking about broadband as critical infrastructure, Government Technology said. For example, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves has stated that broadband access is a priority; Maine Governor Janet Mills has requested \$15 million for broadband; South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem has secured \$25 million; and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has asked for \$35 million. The report by Government Technology indicated that two-thirds of governors have delivered speeches about the importance of broadband or specifically outlining funding requirements and requests.

But what specifically are states putting into place? Pew's Broadband Research Initiative follows the tangible results of state policies in the broadband arena and will release a new report on Thursday detailing how

[days, officials say](#)

[Allentown Morning Call How political party insiders — not voters — dictate Pennsylvania special election candidates](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer There are 34,000 new immigrants eligible to vote in Pa. Trump won the state by 44,000 votes.](#)

[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Bob Casey condemns William Barr for assigning U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh to review information on Bidens, Ukraine](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer Democrats are beating Trump in a key Pa. county he flipped from Obama, poll says](#)

[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial: Baffling endorsements – County Democrats should simply trust voters](#)

[Reuters](#)

states are bridging the broadband gap. As a preview to this new iteration of its findings, Pew Charitable Trusts hosted a conversation with state leaders earlier this month. During the event, Pew experts highlighted the five promising practices they have uncovered, and state policymakers detailed specifics about what they have been doing.

The most important component to state broadband programs is the people, said Katherine de Witt, manager, Pew Broadband Research Initiative. Among these she counts state broadband officers and program teams, legislators and governors, as well as service providers, and others representing a broad range of stakeholders, including education, healthcare, and agriculture. Second in importance is having a policy framework, which defines a clear direction and establishes a goal. One example de Witt provided was the concept of making sure there are no policy barriers to providing broadband, such as a prohibition on who can or cannot provide broadband.

Third on the list of components that are proving successful for states is tying broadband to other policy priorities like education or healthcare. Fourth, then, is gaining funding and addressing accountability, which reinforces the community/provider relationship, de Witt said, and fifth is program evaluation and evolution.



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De Witt pointed to California, which collects data on access and adoption and keeps track of how many previously unconnected households now subscribe. "There is no one activity or policy that solves the problem," de Witt said. "Practices build on and complement one another, and (they are) not necessarily sequential. The steps don't need to be followed in

**Massive changes to California voting spark fears of Iowa-style primary chaos**

sequence." de Witt went on to describe what Pew is calling the "near universal truths of broadband," namely, the importance of executive and legislative leadership; dedicated staff who are visible and responsive; and broadband program leaders who are viewed as neutral partners.

One of the states represented by on the panel at the talk was West Virginia. Kelly Workman, project development manager at the West Virginia Development Office, said the "tip of the spear" for her state is the Broadband Enhancement Council created in 2017. The program has four components - policy and project development, speed testing, mapping and data testing, advocacy and education. "We have several major barriers. We have mountainous topography, low population density and lack of a middle mile infrastructure. Our legislature has taken a methodical approach. We can't do much about the mountains ... but we can improve the middle mile infrastructure," Workman said.

The West Virginia legislature has passed a bill to enable state public electric utilities to begin running the middle mile infrastructure, for example. Broadband is now characterized as a utility in the same manner as water, and there is a dig-once policy. West Virginia will now be a self-regulating state in terms of pole attachments so that when disputes arise they will settle into West Virginia instead of the FCC. "States have long developed water and waste water programs so this is a natural progression to move into broadband infrastructure," Workman said.

The research that will come out from the Pew's Broadband Research Initiative on Thursday will detail more about the promising practices and specifics about how other states are achieving successes. – ***Broadband Technology Report***

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YouTube TV has a new agreement in place with Windstream, continuing the virtual MVPD's trend toward setting new distribution partnerships with traditional pay TV companies. Windstream's Kinetic broadband customers will now have the option to add YouTube TV, which offers more than 70 channels for \$49.99 per month. "Partnering with YouTube TV gives our customers a way to cut the cord without sacrificing live, local coverage and seamlessly access the latest on-demand content," said Jeff Small, president of the consumer and small and midsize business segment at Windstream, in a [statement](#). "Fortunately, for our customers, the reliable high-speed network delivered by Kinetic is the best place to enjoy streaming video."

The Windstream deal is the latest in a series of agreements that have presented YouTube TV as an integrated streaming TV option for broadband providers. Last month, YouTube TV [set a deal](#) with Cincinnati Bell to let customers in the Cincinnati, Ohio area and in Hawaii to buy the streaming service directly from them. YouTube TV is also [featured](#) prominently within Verizon Fios' new "Mix & Match" pricing model designed to give its consumers more choice and flexibility over their video and broadband plans. Google Fiber also recently pulled the plug on its traditional linear video service and opted instead to give subscribers the option of adding on either YouTube TV or fuboTV.

The distribution deals are likely a contributing factor to YouTube TV's growth. The service now has more than 2 million subscribers. For Windstream, the introduction of YouTube TV as an option for its broadband customers arrives about one year after the provider partnered with MobiTV to launch its Kinetic TV streaming service. Kinetic TV is priced at \$75 per month for Windstream's broadband customers. The app is available for connected devices, smart TVs, PCs, tablets and smartphones, and it features live TV, on-demand content, catch-up TV, DVR and recommendations. – *Fierce Video*

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A friend of mine recently asked if stations run more commercials in their newscasts during political season. I wanted to say, "Duh, yes!" but, of course, did not. Political advertising is a specialized field. There are a number of advertising agencies in Washington that have made content and the placement of political ads a science. One thing they all agree on is that the very best place to run a political commercial is in a local newscast. Why? Because local news viewers are far more likely to vote than the general public. That's why stations that do not produce local news rarely receive any political advertising at all.

Stations of course want as much political revenue as possible. Qualified candidates for office have the legal right to pay the lowest unit rate available in any particular time period, but advocacy spots run by political action committees (PACs) have no such protection. Stations are free to charge whatever the market will bear. I've seen last minute PAC advertisers pay up to double the price of normal rates just to get into a first-place local newscast.

For news directors, less time for news during high political demand is a fact of life. More breaks, or much longer breaks, in newscasts are the norm. Hard decisions have to be made such as, "Do we even have time for sports tonight?" News director "victimhood" is often on display. Rather than just acting like a victim, here are some things that might make life a little more bearable. First, make sure you have a good relationship with your general sales manager. Neither of you wants the ratings to hurt, so work together and take time to lay out all your shows, seeing what each would look like with different levels of a temporarily increased commercial load. Try and get an up-front agreement with your GSM as to the most he or she will try to pack into the newscast and do this far in advance of political demand. Otherwise, the heat of the moment just before an election might choke your newscasts. Make sure your general manager is aware of the agreement.

Since promotional spots are the first thing to go during political advertising windows, ask for increased news promotional schedules outside of high demand months. This should be an easy get. Talk with your GM and GSM about possibly producing an unbudgeted prime time political special. Station network contracts provide for these kinds of preemptions, so you will be within the rules. Some of the political advertising pressure can then move to the special. Plus, you can ask for extra resources to produce the show since

all the revenue will be technically unbudgeted. Caution, don't suggest preempting a popular program that has strong revenue; find a weak show.

If political demand is really crazy in your market, offer to start your newscast earlier on a temporary basis. The wisdom of this will, of course, depend on how much revenue will be lost from the regular program you are preempting. Expanding weekend newscasts just before an election might also make sense; look at every option. At some point this year, political advertising is going to temporarily reduce the amount of news in your shows. There is no way around that fact, but thinking ahead can make a real difference. – **NewsLab**

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Lawmakers may change Pennsylvania's sweeping new election law to avoid a logjam of mail-in ballots that could extend vote counting in the presidential race for days afterward, a top lawmaker said Monday.

House Majority Leader Bryan Cutler, R-Lancaster, said the 4-month-old law may be amended to let county election officials open envelopes that contain mail-in ballots before the polls close at 8 p.m. The law currently bars that. Cutler said the change may end up in a "clean-up" bill later this year, depending on what happens during the April 28 primary election. "We want to be prepared," Cutler said after speaking to the Pennsylvania Press Club in Harrisburg. "We are positioning bills."

The new voting law lets any voter mail in a ballot for any reason, whereas the state had previously restricted mail-in ballots to "absentee" voters who met a narrow set of reasons laid out in the constitution, including job-related travel, religious observance, illness or physical disability. As a result, however, some of the county officials who do the actual counting are warning that an avalanche of mail-in ballots could swamp their capacity to tally them on election night. Pennsylvania already will be in the spotlight as a major prize in the presidential contest, at the same time as many counties roll out new voting systems.

Timothy Benyo, chief clerk of the Lehigh County Board of Elections, said counties have been talking to lawmakers and the Department of State about the changes. "They seemed very receptive to making it easier for us so that the vote counting can be done in a timely process and not days later," Benyo said. House State Government Committee Chairman Garth Everett, R-Lycoming, said lawmakers may allow counties to begin to process mail-in ballots by opening envelopes before 8 p.m., but he does not support allowing them to start the actual tallying of mail-in votes before that time.

Everett said lawmakers were responding to feedback from county elections workers. "We don't know what kind of percentage increase we're going to get in mail-in ballots until we do it. That's definitely an issue," Everett said. "Our intent was never to jam them up. It was to make it easier for voters to be able to vote." Forrest Lehman, the director of elections in Lycoming County, said the ability to open the envelopes before 8 p.m. on election night is meaningless if the Legislature doesn't also change the law to require that challenges to mail-in and absentee ballots be filed in advance.

Challenges made during counting on election night will bog down the process, and challengers — usually members of an opposing political party — can easily be required to file challenges days in advance of the election since counties already are required to produce lists of people who are voting by absentee ballot before the election, Lehman said. Such legislation also would head off the potential that vote counting in a close election is purposely gummed up by political operatives who file a large number of challenges on election night, Lehman said.

Lehman supports letting counties actually count the votes before polls close. "I think the Legislature ought to trust counties to take those steps and keep them confidential until election night," Lehman said. Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar, whose office oversees elections on the state level, said a month ago that counties already have the legal authority to do some processing of mail-in ballots before the day of the vote, including checking voters' eligibility and whether envelopes have been properly filled out. "So there's a lot they can do beforehand, and we're going to be providing guidance to counties to break the component pieces of the canvassing process down in Pennsylvania so that even if they can't count every last vote on election night, they can start the process and get it going," Boockvar said in January. – **Associated Press; and in the Philadelphia Inquirer. "What happens if you vote absentee in Pa. and then your candidate drops out?"**

