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February 28, 2020

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**CEO's son**  
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**of Nerd Street**  
**Gamers, a**  
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**The Markup**  
**Google's black**  
**box algorithm**  
**controls which**  
**political emails**  
**land in your**  
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**Associated**  
**Press**  
**Pa. sued over**  
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**Pennlive**  
**More than**  
**20,000 Pa.**  
**voters sign up**  
**to vote by mail**

**Allentown**  
**Morning Call**  
**Pennsylvania**  
**poll: Few**  
**voters**  
**concerned**  
**about foreign**  
**interference in**  
**November**  
**election, but**  
**voting**  
**problems a**  
**bigger worry**

**Pennlive**  
**Once feisty**  
**Mike Folmer is**  
**not fighting**  
**child**  
**pornography**  
**charges: 'I'm at**  
**the mercy of**  
**the court'**

**Philadelphia**  
**Inquirer**

The Federal Communications Commission is seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in fines from the country's top cellphone carriers after officials found the companies failed to safeguard information about customers' real-time locations, according to people familiar with the matter.

The telecommunications regulator in recent weeks informed AT&T Inc., Sprint Corp., T-Mobile and Verizon Communications Inc. of pending notices of apparent liability, the people said. Such notices aren't final, and the companies can still argue they aren't liable or should pay less. It would ultimately fall on the U.S. Justice Department to collect any penalties.

The proposed fines, which could total more than \$200 million, are expected to be announced Friday, one of the people said. Last month, FCC chairman Ajit Pai notified members of Congress that an agency investigation had concluded that "one or more" carriers had apparently violated federal law by disclosing real-time location data.

The FCC moved after some of the carriers had continued sharing their subscribers' coordinates even after they told members of Congress they were cutting off the middlemen companies from using their data feeds. Verizon has said it **stopped sharing cellular location data** in 2018. AT&T and T-Mobile said in early 2019 that they were cutting off some location data sharing.

The top U.S. wireless providers **agreed to curb their data sharing** after independent reporting found data aggregators were misusing feeds that provided subscribers' real-time locations. Upon request, the carriers would pinpoint specific subscribers and share the result with middlemen companies, which then shared the information with hundreds of other businesses.

Some privacy advocates criticized the FCC action as overdue. "Consumers have no choice but to share highly private information with a provider about everywhere they go" to obtain cellular service, said Laura Moy, associate director at the Center on Privacy & Technology at Georgetown Law. "Carriers are not allowed to turn around and sell that location information to anyone with a phone number and a few dollars to spend. But this has been a widespread practice, and the FCC has been slow to rein it in."

Sen. Ron Wyden (D., Ore.), who wrote to carriers in 2018 after the location-sharing partnerships were revealed to ask about their data privacy practices, called the proposed fines inadequate. He said in a tweet that strong privacy legislation was needed. Cellphone companies need to know their subscribers' coordinates to route calls and data to the right place. That gives them a more consistent view of customers' movements than app developers, which use global positioning systems, Wi-Fi and other data sources that users can shut off through their smartphone settings. Wireless carriers also sell anonymized location data to marketers.

Data aggregators LocationSmart Inc. and Zumigo Inc. told The Wall Street Journal they distributed real-time locations to legitimate clients, including bank fraud-detection departments and roadside assistance services. But others used the data feeds for what the carriers said were unauthorized purposes. One prison phone provider created a website that let law-enforcement agencies find the location of any cellphone user without obtaining a court order, the **New York Times** and **Motherboard** have reported.

**Mike Bloomberg's ad spending in Pennsylvania is getting bigger and bigger**

The FCC didn't offer the carriers any settlements, one of the people said. That might prompt some carriers to fight the charges against them through the commission's administrative process. The fines, if paid, could fall heavily on T-Mobile if it closes its planned merger with Sprint in the coming weeks. The two companies recently revised the terms of that agreement, which was worth \$26 billion when it was signed two years ago. Under the revised merger, the parent companies of T-Mobile and Sprint agreed to split the cost of any liabilities up to \$200 million. Sprint owner SoftBank Group Corp. would be on the hook for excess liabilities above \$200 million. — *Wall Street Journal*

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President Donald Trump has closed the gap in swing-state Pennsylvania with most of the Democrats seeking to defeat his bid for a second term, according to a new poll. But there's a double-whammy hiding in plain sight among the good news for Trump. Voters give Trump his best marks — 58% approval — on the economy. But some of his worst numbers — 36% approval — are on health care.

The Muhlenberg College/Morning Call poll landed Thursday. That was just a day after Trump addressed the nation from the White House, seeking to downplay distress about COVID-19, the coronavirus spreading around the world from China — even as Trump's own health advisers warn of the disease's dangerous potential in the United States. Those warnings have sent the stock market — an economic indicator frequently touted by Trump — stumbling into a prolonged plummet.

Chris Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, called that a "potentially damning confluence of factors." "If the current outbreak does impact the economy, and it's likely it will, at least to some degree, and his handling of the situation further chips away at his poor marks in health care management, that could be very damaging to his standing," Borick said. "I think he knows that. You could sense the urgency from the White House."

Trump's position in Pennsylvania, which was key to his 2016 victory and is expected to play a similarly decisive role in 2020, has improved since Borick's last poll in November. Still, 54% of voters said Trump does not deserve a second term, while 42% said he should be reelected. The poll of 424 voters, conducted from Feb. 12 to 20, has a margin of error of plus or minus 5.5 percentage points.

Only U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the current Democratic front-runner, leads Trump in Pennsylvania, 49% to 46%. Such hypothetical matchups so far from Election Day have little predictive value. The "greatest fall" in numbers, Borick noted, was for former Vice President Joe Biden, who is now tied with Trump at 47%. Biden, who often emphasizes his family roots in Scranton, led Trump in November, 52% to 43%. "He doesn't seem to have, at least at this point, a clear message," Borick said of Biden.

Trump is also in a statistical tie with U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, and former Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Ind. Borick found one surprise in the poll's results: Former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg trails Trump, 48% to 45%, despite unprecedented spending by the billionaire on television ads and political infrastructure in Pennsylvania. "Like Biden, he is someone who is pitching electability," Borick said. "It seems that key message is tenuous at this point."

Tuesday marked the deadline for legal challenges to nomination petitions filed by candidates to be listed on the April 28 primary election ballot. Jeff Dempsey took a novel approach to that. Dempsey, one of the Democrats challenging State Rep. Mary Isaacson in [the 175th District](#), saw what appeared to be a buddy's signature on her petitions. The buddy, John Wilt, denied signing it.

Together, they created a website — [notmysignature.com](#) — and a robocall asking people to review Isaacson's petitions to see if their names were improperly signed. The result: zero complaints. Isaacson, needing 300 valid signatures to get on the ballot, submitted 980. No legal challenge was filed. "We're not going to spend our money on some high-priced attorney to come up with some [fakakta](#) way to get her off the ballot," Dempsey said.

Isaacson noted there is no proof she or the Democratic committee member from the 31st Ward who circulated the petition in question did anything improper. Someone may have signed Wilt's name without their knowledge. "It's just a shame that in today's atmosphere, caused by the hyperactivity of political rhetoric, that the man running against me has chosen to start his campaign by being disingenuous with the voters," Isaacson said.

Former State Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, who [resigned from office](#) in December 2018 after being convicted of bribery and other charges, said she had a team circulating petitions for other candidates this cycle. One of her clients, Parthenia Izzard, now faces a legal challenge. Izzard, one of the Democrats [seeking to challenge](#) State Sen. Daylin Leach [in the 17th District](#), really didn't want to talk about it. "I'm finding out things probably at the same time you're finding out things," she said before hanging up on Clout.

The challenge filed by attorney Timothy Ford says three out of every four of the 790 signatures submitted for Izzard are invalid for some reason. A few problems of note: The district covers parts of Montgomery and Delaware Counties but signatures appear to have come from five other counties and three other states. Izzard needs 500 valid signatures from inside the district to qualify for the ballot.

Brown, who signed off as circulator on all of Izzard's petitions, said she had not seen the legal challenge. She defended her work, saying Izzard came to her in the final week of the three-week petition season. "I've been just doing odd jobs and doing what I can to get by," said Brown, who is [still on probation](#). "It has not been easy. You're managing a team of folks and you do the best you can, especially when it comes in at the last minute like that."  
– Chris Brennan's "Clout" column in *Philadelphia Daily News*



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