

UNCAPPED POTENTIAL CABLE ACADEMY 2017

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The 29th annual Cable Academy, presented by the Pennsylvania Cable & Telecommunications Foundation, 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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It's hard to imagine anyone [lacking access to broadband internet service](#) nowadays. The internet, for good or ill, has become a nearly essential utility, touching just about every aspect of our lives, from communications to commerce. And education.

The web hasn't really changed how teachers approach their jobs, but it has changed some of the means they use to instruct students, replacing backboards with Chromebooks and tablets with, well, tablets. Yet in some areas of York County – and Pennsylvania, and the country, for that matter – access to broadband service is lacking. Now, that may seem like a first-world problem, and to some extent it is, but for many parents and students, it can stifle their educations, making, at the very least, keeping up with their classmates inconvenient.

The vast majority of York County has access to broadband services, whether it's DSL or cable or satellite, but some of York County's more rural areas are shut out, forcing parents and students to take sometimes extreme measures to get connected. That's despite a 2004 state mandate for telecommunications companies to ensure that broadband service is universally available. Obviously, it isn't. And since 2004, the notion of what constitutes high-speed internet has changed. The law [should be updated](#), something that state Rep. Kristen Phillips Hill, R-York Township, [has taken up](#).

According to the state Department of Economic and Community Development, pockets of rural southern York County are shut out when it comes to high-speed internet access. U.S. Census data from 2015 shows that 4 percent of the county's population has access to broadband only through phones or a mobile hot spot. That's better than the national average of 6 percent, but it is still significant. This effects a variety of aspects of rural life, from farmers being unable to quickly access current market information or to shop around for the best prices on equipment or commodities, to students being unable to do their homework at home. It's about much more than being able to watch a viral video of a cat playing the piano.

[Nationals-Orioles TV Hearing Reset For March 31](#)

[Fierce Cable Comcast Business launching cloud-based video surveillance product, report says](#)

[pennlive.com Gov. Tom Wolf: Many Pennsylvanians will be hurt by Donald Trump's budget](#)

[Allentown Morning Call Pennsylvania legislators react to President Trump's budget proposal](#)

[pennlive.com Corman's out. So what does that mean for the rest of the GOP gubernatorial field?](#)

[Calkins Media Toomey 'encouraged' by Trump budget proposal, Casey calls it 'a series of broken promises'](#)

In parts of southern York County, parents only have access to high-speed internet service through their smart phones, the most expensive access to the web. Once they burn through their monthly data allowance, the fees add up quickly. Other parents have taken to driving to the school after hours and sitting in the parking lot while their children access the school's wi-fi network. Others have taken to having their kids do their homework at businesses or restaurants that offer wi-fi service. (Delta Pizza is among them, and owner Sal Ferranti deserves credit for being more than accommodating, allowing kids to do homework at his restaurant without having to make a purchase.) But speaking broadly, this situation is unacceptable.

The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual. ~ Vince Lombardi

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Apparently, in some parts of the state, that deadline has passed and some still remain without access to the service.

For students at rural districts to be on a level playing field with their classmates, and students from suburban or urban districts, access to broadband is vital. As Rona Kauffman, superintendent of the South Eastern School District, said, "It's an issue of equity." – *York Daily Record* editorial

Lancaster city government should not be involved in the broadband networking business ("[City may loan \\$3 million to network builder](#)," March 1). There are several internet providers in Lancaster County. The politicians want to use money from the city water fund. They found this money by refinancing the water fund. How do they refinance money not received yet? A while back we had a 20 percent increase. I'm a disabled senior, I have trouble paying the bill now, and I am afraid to drink the water.

I hope city council will have the foresight to turn down this proposal for LanCity Connect or use private financing to pay for it. The city plans to use LanCity Connect for remote water meter reading; how much more will that cost, another \$5 million to \$7 million? Water will be so expensive. Can for once things be left alone? Or better yet, sell the water department to the private sector; they always do a better job. – **Letter from a reader in Manheim Township (Lancaster Co.) on lancasteronline.com**

Legislation that critics say would diminish Minnesota regulators' oversight of electricity co-ops was approved by the Senate Thursday. The House passed similar legislation last month, and — like the Senate — by a comfortable margin. But Gov. Mark Dayton last month indicated he could veto bills perceived as weakening the authority of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

The PUC already has minimal oversight over the state's 45 electric co-ops, whose directors are elected by members. But last summer, the PUC opened a review of grid connection fees that the co-ops had begun charging for new residential solar arrays. The review was triggered by complaints from some co-op customers who claimed the monthly fees — ranging from \$7 to \$83 — were a disincentive to install solar panels. The co-ops say the fees are needed to cover their fixed costs.

As originally written, the co-op legislation would have outright killed the PUC's solar fee investigation. The bills were amended, though, after Dayton said he "would not accept any bill that limits or weakens the [PUC's] authority." That statement came last month when Dayton announced he would sign legislation allowing Xcel Energy to build a large gas-fired power plant in Becker — even though Xcel had been criticized for making an end-run around the PUC. Dayton said the Becker plant was of "critical" economic importance.

The Senate Thursday voted 39-26 to adopt the co-op legislation, while the House last month passed it by a vote of 89-37. Both bills would allow the PUC to complete its investigation, limited to the co-ops' fee-setting methodology. If that methodology doesn't comply with state law, the PUC can recommend necessary changes. But opponents of the legislation said the PUC couldn't order any changes. Rather, the co-op or an "independent third party" would resolve any dispute over fees. "No matter what the PUC rules, the co-op can handle it the way it wants to," said Matt Privratsky of Fresh Energy, a St. Paul-based advocacy group for renewable energy.

Jim Horan, attorney for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, said the co-ops would have to "take into account whatever the commission determines." If the PUC pans how the fees are charged, "we would have to reimburse the charges and start over," Horan said. — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

There's a new reason to call it March Madness.

CBSSports.com, where fans fill out brackets for the NCAA basketball championship tournament, drove users crazy when the site crashed Thursday morning. According to DownDetector, which tracks social media posts about connectivity issues, a flood of fans began reporting issues accessing brackets on CBSSports.com around 11 am ET. That was just minutes before tipoff of the Notre Dame v. Princeton game in Buffalo.

"During the hour before the first tip, service was down due to overwhelming demand," CBS Sports said in a statement issued around 1 pm ET. "We certainly regret the outage but are pleased to say that service has since been restored." The site appeared to be up and running again just after noon. But not before Twitter lit up with frustrated users.

Bracket making is a massively popular endeavor for basketball fans during the tournament. The American Gaming Association estimates that about 70 million brackets will be filled out this season. Though CBS Sports isn't the only site that hosts brackets, it's a popular destination since CBS Sports and Turner Sports (which is owned by CNN parent Time Warner) are the primary broadcasters of the games. -- *CNN*

