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Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf said Monday his administration will make \$35 million available to encourage telecommunications companies to extend high-speed internet service to areas of Pennsylvania that lack it. And state Rep. Pam Snyder, D-Jefferson, who has led a two-year bipartisan fight to secure high-speed internet for rural areas, said Tuesday, "This is a good starting point."

Snyder said she welcomed Wolf's commitment to address the service deficiency through creation of a new state office and financial incentive program. "I'm glad to see the governor recognize the importance of this issue, which I have been diligently fighting for on behalf of rural Pennsylvanians," Snyder said. "I've been committed to making sure rural areas aren't left behind or stranded on the technology highway. "Moves like this mean that students, employees and businesses in rural districts — in fact, all of our citizens — can be competitive in the ever-evolving information age. Any effort that moves this needle in the right direction is a victory for those of us who've tackled this issue with passion." Snyder has worked closely with state Rep. Rep. Kristin Phillips-Hill, a Republican from York County, to bring broadband access to the 800,000 Pennsylvanians who lack it. Both lawmakers lauded Wolf's initiatives.

Wolf's announcement was two-fold: Creation of the Pennsylvania Office of Broadband Initiatives, which is responsible for developing and executing a statewide strategy to expand access to every Pennsylvanian by 2022; and formation of the Pennsylvania Broadband Investment Incentive Program, which will offer up to \$35 million in financial incentives to private bidders in the Federal Communications Commission's upcoming Connect America Fund Phase II Auction. "I want to ensure every Pennsylvania household and business has access to modern day high-speed internet," Wolf said. "Equal access to the internet, regardless of location or income, must be provided if Pennsylvania

**Oversight' at ACA Summit**

**Reuters Future of TV in balance as AT&T, Time Warner plead merger case**

**Washington Post AT&T offered this deal to 1,000 competitors to address concerns over Time Warner. Twenty have accepted.**

**Zap2It Cable Top 25 for Week Ending March 18**

**Harrisburg Patriot-News Accuser of Rep. Nick Miccarelli says his decision to not seek re-election is 'not enough'**

**Philadelphia Inquirer Pa.'s Fourth Congressional District race was looking like a lock for Montgomery County women. Then along came Joe**

**Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Shannon Edwards fails to file paperwork to run for Congress**

**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Saccone concedes 18th district race in phone call to Lamb**

is to remain competitive, if we want to offer every child the best education, if we want to live in a state where we all can access modern day healthcare options, if we want a state where our farms and other businesses thrive, and the jobs of tomorrow are created.”

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Snyder wanted to make it clear that when she referred to students in rural areas, particularly Greene County, being competitive in the information age, she was not addressing the school districts but rather internet availability within the homes. “These state funds will augment the nearly \$2 billion the federal government is making available nationwide to providers willing to expand broadband access in underserved areas,” Snyder said.

Former Bradford County Commissioner Mark Smith, who has served the Wolf administration as a deputy chief of staff, will now serve as executive director of the new Office of Broadband initiatives. During Monday’s announcement, Smith acknowledged Snyder and Phillips-Hill for their work on this issue. In a related move, Snyder and Phillips-Hill announced a renewed push for their legislation that calls for an inventory of state-owned assets — such as communication towers, poles and buildings — that could be used to leverage the expansion of high-speed

broadband internet to unserved and underserved areas. When Snyder was asked Tuesday what might be the timetable for implementation of Wolf’s ambitious project, she echoed the governor’s estimate of “by the end of 2022.”

The incentives are designed to be available ahead of a \$2 billion Federal Communications Commission auction that subsidizes the build-out of broadband internet to unserved areas so that it helps private companies to bid more competitively in the FCC’s auction by lowering the amount of federal funds needed for projects, the administration said. Issues that helped convince Wolf the unserved and underserved areas need a jump start into the 21st technological century include:

- Residents in sparsely populated areas say it is next to impossible to stream TV shows, telecommute, do videoconferencing or consistently access their cloud-based email.
- The FCC estimates that about 800,000 Pennsylvania residents lack access to high-speed internet access. About two-thirds are in rural areas, while one-third is in urban areas.
- However, 20 percent of rural Pennsylvanians do not have speedy internet connections, compared to 3 percent in urban areas, an example of the so-called digital divide between technological haves and have-nots.
- Pennsylvania recently lost its bid to keep \$140 million in federal subsidies for rural broadband after Verizon declined it two years ago.

The Wolf administration said the state Department of Transportation will use the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Bank to offer the incentives in exchange for dedicated or enhanced network services from private providers. That will help PennDOT improve network services along key roadways, the administration said. – **Uniontown (Fayette Co.) Herald-Standard**; [also, see the Herald-Standard's editorial](#)

The state Senate voted unanimously Tuesday to support a bill that would allow gubernatorial candidates to pick their running mates. Currently, voters elect lieutenant governor candidates in primary elections. The change would help “avoid division at the top of the executive branch” while helping the governor and lieutenant governor run on a “shared vision,” said state Sen. David Argall, R-Schuylkill County, a co-sponsor of the bill.

The **bill approved Tuesday** wouldn't go into effect until 2022, according to Argall's office. The House will now consider the bill. Five Republican and seven Democratic candidates are running for lieutenant governor this year in Pennsylvania, including incumbent Lt. Gov. Mike Stack.

Gov. Tom Wolf stripped Stack of his police protective detail and reduced staffing at his taxpayer-funded home near Harrisburg last year after Stack apologized for verbally mistreating state workers. Wolf has not endorsed a candidate in the race. Lieutenant governor candidates in Pennsylvania appear separately from gubernatorial candidates on primary election ballots. The primary winners for each party appear together with the gubernatorial candidates on general election ballots.

The change would require the state constitution to be amended. Gubernatorial candidates that win their party primaries would pick lieutenant governors at least 90 days before general elections, and their picks would be subject to party approval, according to the bill. – **Pittsburgh Tribune-Review**

Hazleton Area basketball fans who can't attend the Cougars' next game can “listen” to it on television. WYLN-TV 35 has received permission from the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association to do an “audio broadcast” of the Class 6A state semifinal boys' basketball playoff.

The game between Hazleton Area and Abraham Lincoln High School of Philadelphia will be played at 1 p.m. Saturday at Freedom High School in Bethlehem. Earlier in the week, the PIAA denied WYLN's request to televise the game. The organization said the game would air on NFHS Network, an online service of the National Federation of State High School Associations. The PIAA is a member of the NFHS. The network charges a \$9.95 monthly fee to watch sporting events. The PIAA was a charter participant in the network when it launched Aug. 1, 2013.

On Wednesday, WYLN announced on its Facebook page that after learning it could not televise the game, it immediately submitted for the rights to do the audio-cast. “You will hear the game and see the score on television and see our advertisers on screen who are making this possible,” WYLN's Facebook post states. WYLN is on channel 7 on Service Electric Cablevision and other cable TV providers.

“At WYLN-TV35, we don't give up! We want our community to get the game, even if it means LISTENING to the game via the power of local television,” the post reads.

WYLN broadcast two earlier state playoff games — the Cougars' first-round win over Norristown and their third-round victory over Abington. The game in between, a victory over Pocono Mountain West, was scheduled to be televised but an issue at the game site scuttled those plans. – **Hazleton Standard-Speaker**

