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**Allentown Morning Call**  
**Where do PA's senators stand on the Senate's SCOTUS showdown?**

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai laid out preliminary plans to roll back the agency's net neutrality rules in a meeting this week with trade associations, according to several people familiar with the matter.

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

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The conversation shows that the FCC chairman is inching closer to making his plans public, possibly as soon as this month. The plans appear aimed at preserving the basic principles of net neutrality but shifting enforcement to the Federal Trade Commission, while undoing what Republican critics regard as the regulatory overreach of the FCC's rules. FCC officials didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

**The FCC created the rules during the Obama administration,** requiring internet service providers to treat all internet traffic the same. The regulations have been criticized by telecommunications companies, as well as Mr. Pai and other Republicans, who say the rules are heavy-handed and could discourage investment

in broadband.

Broadband providers have challenged the FCC rules in court, so far unsuccessfully. A federal appeals court panel upheld the rules last year, but further appeals continue. It remains unclear when the FCC could move forward with the planned rollback, which is sure to spark an outcry from consumer groups and some congressional Democrats. They—along with some internet firms—view strong net neutrality rules as crucial to maintaining competition on the internet. They are skeptical of any effort to roll back the rules.

Mr. Pai's plans could begin to be adopted as soon as the FCC's monthly meeting in May, although the June meeting remains possibility, according to one person familiar with the matter. The FCC currently comprises Mr. Pai, Republican Michael O'Rielly and Democrat Mignon Clyburn. Two seats on the five-person panel are vacant, waiting for President Donald Trump to nominate new commissioners. The multistep plan that is emerging appears aimed at eventually shifting oversight for net neutrality to the FTC, which has long overseen most internet-related business, according to people familiar with the discussions.

Under federal law, the FTC lost much of its oversight of broadband providers when the FCC adopted its net neutrality policy, because the FCC rules reclassified broadband providers as common carriers subject to the agency's oversight. Mr. Pai's plans likely would reverse that reclassification eventually, so the FTC again would have jurisdiction over the telecommunications carriers. To preserve the basic tenets of net neutrality, the plans would require broadband providers to pledge to abide by net neutrality

principles such as no blocking or paid prioritization of internet traffic. That would allow the FTC to go after violators for deceptive or unfair trade practices.

Mr. Pai also is believed to be considering provisions to restore FTC oversight of broadband providers' consumer privacy protections. GOP lawmakers, with the backing of Mr. Pai, recently passed a measure repealing an Obama-era FCC privacy rule that broadband providers criticized as unfairly restrictive. — ***Wall Street Journal***

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Roku appears to be arming itself for the coming net neutrality war.

The web video streaming and hardware company has plenty at stake as the Federal Communications Commission **prepares to pull back rules** that require internet providers to treat all web traffic equally. For Roku and others in the business, an end to the Obama-era protections could make it harder — or, in some cases, more expensive — **to offer content or services** to customers at top download speeds.

That's why Roku has **hired a pair of Republican lobbyists** through an outside government-affairs firm, according to a federal ethics reports filed this week, specifically to focus on net neutrality. It's the first time the company has ever retained lobbyists in Washington, D.C.

Many in the tech industry support the Obama-era FCC's net neutrality rules, which currently subject telecom companies to utility-style regulation. To Democrats, it's the only way to stop the likes of AT&T, Comcast\*, Charter or Verizon from blocking competing services or charging media companies for faster delivery of their content.

But Republicans, including new FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, have long **opposed that approach**. In recent weeks, President Donald Trump has "pledged to reverse this overreach," **in the words of White House press secretary Sean Spicer**. Senior Republicans, however, are mum on the timeline or plan.

For years, Netflix had been a primary political player in this fight, as a public advocate for strong open internet rules that sparred openly with the likes of Comcast. **As Netflix has struck deals with the cable giant and others to speed up its traffic**, however, the streaming company has tempered its tone. Enter Roku, which, unlike Netflix, soon may find reason to be even *more* vocal in the debate: The company is considering whether it should launch an over-the-top pay TV service, sources have said. In other words, it increasingly could find itself in direct competition with internet providers.

Roku has tangled with telecom over net neutrality in the past. In 2014, Roku sought the FCC's help after Comcast blocked users from streaming HBO and Showtime using Roku devices. The two companies settled the matter on their own by November of that year. Asked about its new lobbyists, a Roku spokeswoman told Recode on Tuesday that the company "has a long record of engagement in the regulatory and policy discussions regarding net neutrality and we continue to share our views with members of Congress as well as the FCC." — ***Recode***

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YouTube said Thursday that video channels on its site must now have more than 10,000 total views before the company will place ads on their videos, a major shift in policy the company said is designed to punish rule breakers.

The move by YouTube, owned by Alphabet Inc.'s Google, comes amid a backlash from advertisers over the company's placement of ads on objectionable videos. The change is likely to reassure some advertisers, though it could also upset many of its millions of creators. YouTube wouldn't specify how many accounts would be affected by the change. Internet-data firm Pex estimates that 164.5 million, or 88% of all YouTube channels, have cumulative views each under 10,000. But those channels represent just 5% of the 13.2 trillion views on YouTube all time.

YouTube said the policy has been in the works since November and is designed to block channels that steal others' content for revenue. The company has long allowed all video creators to apply to run ads on their videos, and many typically were approved.

The open policy enabled advertisers to reach users on little-visited corners of the internet, while amateur video creators could earn a few dollars by posting their projects on YouTube. In some cases, YouTube has also given rise to full-fledged stars who can earn seven-figure salaries each year. But that system also caused some ads to appear alongside objectionable material, such as videos supporting terrorists or touting racist messages. After news outlets **highlighted such cases** in recent weeks, some big advertisers reduced or pulled their spending from YouTube and the company promised changes to better police content and give marketers more transparency and control.

By focusing on accounts with more than 10,000 total views, YouTube said it can better vet accounts to see if they are appropriate for advertising. "This new threshold gives us enough information to determine

the validity of a channel,” the company said in a blog post. “It also allows us to confirm if a channel is following our community guidelines and advertiser policies.” The new limit “will help ensure revenue only flows to creators who are playing by the rules.”

YouTube said once an account surpasses 10,000 views, the company would review the account’s content to determine if it qualifies for advertising. YouTube said the move is designed to crack down on so-called impersonators that re-upload videos posted by others. The company said it recently made it easier to report such accounts, and has since removed hundreds of thousands of channels as a result.

The new policy is also likely to block ads from some objectionable content, but the 10,000-view threshold is so low that many unsavory videos alone have amassed hundreds of thousands of views, including two videos with ads from major brands that included the racist slur “n-----” in the title and dubbed a racist song over footage of former First Lady Michelle Obama or Chicago rapper Chief Keef. “I think it’s a very genius move by YouTube,” said Pex Chief Executive Rasty Turek. “They’ll cut off 88% of the channels, which mean maybe 88% of the problems, but only 5% of the traffic.”

The financial impact on individual YouTube creators is likely to be small; advertisers pay roughly \$7 to \$12 for 1,000 views—though sometimes much less or more depending on the circumstances—and creators split that revenue with YouTube. – **Wall Street Journal**

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The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission is launching a comprehensive review of programs to support low-income utility customers, a sensitive issue because the costs of such “universal services” programs are inevitably borne by all customers. The PUC **voted Thursday** to launch the review, which is to include a report from the commission’s Law Bureau and suggestions from “stakeholders representing all interests, from low-income customers to consumer interest advocates to utilities, to ensure any outcomes are cost-effective and in the public interest.”

The motion to launch the review was sponsored by Commissioners David W. Sweet and Andrew G. Place, who in March initiated a more **narrowly focused one-year study** on whether the state’s low-income customers may be paying too much of their household incomes on utility bills. The March measure passed by a 3-2 vote. A more harmonious PUC approved Thursday’s resolution unanimously. State law requires electric and natural-gas utilities to offer universal service and energy-conservation programs to ensure utility services are affordable. – **philly.com**

