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The top eight U.S. cable companies added just over 1.23 million high-speed internet customers in the first quarter, led by Charter Communications (582,000 additional customers) and Comcast (up 477,000 users).

For the cable business, it was the best customer performance since Q1 2007.

The data comes from a [quarterly report published by Leichtman Research Group \(LRG\)](#). Overall, the top cable operators have around 69.2 million broadband subscribers in the U.S., which accounts for about two-thirds of the wireline broadband market. Cable operators continue to hemorrhage video users—a fact that will be once again driven home Thursday, when LRG publishes its quarterly look at the telecom-based pay TV business.

But the calculus for the cable business has clearly changed. For instance, Comcast's top cable TV executive, Dave Watson, told investors this week that the company's Flex OTT device—which is given out for free to Comcast broadband-only users as an enticement—has now reached 1 million deployments. Video is decidedly a secondary business for cable. And for now, with fixed wireless 5G encroachment on cable's turf still just a discussion and not a reality, the demise of traditional linear pay TV should not be conflated with a narrative of cable's business.

Overall, [Cable Academy regular Bruce Leichtman of LRG](#) said the top 16 telecom companies controlling 96% of the U.S. wireline internet business added 1.165 million customers in Q1, with "telco" operators like AT&T continuing to shed legacy DSL customers. It was the best cumulative performance for the wireline broadband industry in five years. — **NextTV**

As Republicans in the legislature continue to pass reopening bills that are doomed to be vetoed, some Pennsylvania counties are abandoning plans to restart their local economies without Gov. Tom Wolf's blessing. Over the last week, a growing number of counties that are still in the "red" phase of Wolf's three-tiered reopening plan vowed to buck the state and unilaterally ease coronavirus-related restrictions on businesses and residents.

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**[Washington Post  
The limits of smartphone data are on display as the country seeks to reopen](#)**

**[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette  
How will life be different under Gov. Wolf's yellow phase?](#)**

**[Philadelphia Inquirer  
A top Pennsylvania Republican said coronavirus only threatens children in poor health. That's not true.](#)**

**[Harrisburg Patriot-News  
Coronavirus testing still lags, creating a possible impediment for Pa. reopening efforts](#)**

The GOP-controlled state Senate approved a bill Wednesday that would give counties the power to do so, by opting out of Wolf's business closure and stay-at-home orders. "This allows counties to decide on their own what they want to do and what they don't want to do," Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R., Jefferson) said. "This allows counties to decide what businesses can open and what ones do not open." "Brookville isn't Manhattan, Coudersport isn't Philadelphia," he continued, juxtaposing rural areas of the state that have had few COVID-19 cases to urban epicenters. "These are very different places and very different circumstances."

The vote was preceded by a joint committee hearing with commissioners from Beaver and Dauphin Counties, which have both threatened to reopen without Wolf's approval, as well as with representatives from counties that are already open, and one that's far from that goal: Delaware County, in the hard-hit southeast.

Jeff Haste, chair of the Dauphin County Board of Commissioners and a Republican, told lawmakers he's been "frustrated at the lack of clear communication from the administration, but we want to work with everybody to try to move this forward."

While the county's commissioners previously said they would move the area to the "yellow" phase without Wolf's approval, allowing many businesses to resume in-person operations, they dropped that plan Wednesday. During a board meeting, Haste said there are still [no plans to prosecute businesses](#) that reopen, PennLive reported.

That promise will only apply to local enforcement. Earlier this week, Wolf warned that companies that reopen without state approval risk losing required certifications and that the State Police will continue to issue warnings and fines. But according to Lt. Col. Scott Price, deputy commissioner for operations, troopers will continue to use citations as a "last resort."

The agency will also defer to municipal departments, which may choose to take the same restrained enforcement approach, Price told reporters Wednesday. "In those areas that we have primary jurisdiction, our emphasis will continue ... to be encouragement, education, and work to build the public trust, and try to explain why it's important to follow these orders," Price said.

In total, troopers have issued 329 warnings and one citation to businesses that have violated Wolf's business closure order. They've issued 34 warnings and seven citations to people over stay-at-home order enforcement. So far, Wolf's administration has given 37 of the state's 67 counties the go-ahead to ease coronavirus restrictions, with more expected to be announced Friday. While that includes much of western and north-central Pennsylvania, not all counties in those areas were allowed to advance. That includes Beaver County, which has seen a serious outbreak in one nursing home.

Daniel Camp, a Republican county commissioner, told the Senate committees he was disappointed at how long it took the Department of Health to [implement universal testing](#) at long-term-care facilities and send in the National Guard to Brighton Rehabilitation & Wellness Center, where 71 people have died. Beaver County, as well as [Lancaster](#) and [Lebanon](#) Counties, are moving forward with plans to reopen without state approval, while other counties, including Dauphin and Schuylkill, have backed away from the threat. "Come this Friday, we plan on opening because we're getting hundreds of emails, text messages, phone calls of these business owners that are on the brink of closing down," Camp told Senate lawmakers. "We do believe that this one nursing home is holding us back."

Wolf is not veering from his strategy to reopen the state's economy gradually and in waves, even as Republicans in the General Assembly unapologetically savage his decision-making. On Monday, the normally soft-spoken governor talked about the revolt in terms normally reserved for combat. "These folks are

choosing to desert in the face of the enemy in the middle of a war that we Pennsylvanians are winning — and that we must win,” Wolf said as he threatened to withhold some federal stimulus dollars from rogue counties.

In addition to the bill that would give counties reopening powers, the Senate on Wednesday passed legislation that would allow garden shops, barber shops, and real estate offices statewide to resume in-person operations. They have been shuttered since March under Wolf’s order closing all businesses that aren’t “life-sustaining.” The state House, also controlled by Republicans, is scheduled to vote on the measures Thursday. If they pass in that chamber, they’ll head to Wolf, who has recently vetoed similar bills.

While some lawmakers have ramped up their rhetoric against Wolf’s orders, the public is still largely with him. A Washington Post poll released this week showed 72% of adults in the state approve of his handling of the pandemic. Brian Zidek, chair of the Delaware County Council and a Democrat, told lawmakers Wednesday the issue of reopening counties has become too political. “We all want the same thing,” he said. “I’d ask everyone to stop politicizing this.... It’s not all Trump’s fault, it’s not all Wolf’s fault.” – **Spotlight PA; and in Philadelphia Inquirer: Most people support coronavirus lockdowns. But Trump is fighting them as he comes to Pa.**

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With a health crisis and an economic crisis in a state with divided government, it’s all but inevitable that sooner or later, you also get a governing crisis. That’s the way of modern politics. That’s what Pennsylvania has now.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, the Republican-run legislature and a number of GOP local officials, are in a tug-of-war over how and when to reopen the state. This as the growth of virus cases and the death count slows; but amid rising fears that opening too soon starts a second viral wave. It’s health/safety issues versus economic/livelihood needs; businesses risking opening with penalties against fears of never opening again. Frustrations run high.

A nurse, especially upset about state-at-home orders, emails to ask, “Since when have we ever quarantined the healthy?” A struggling small business owner tells me, “If we have to wait another month to open up, it may be too late for my employees.” Add to this mix some public confusion. And leadership that’s divided.

It’s a divide that existed but was semi-hidden in the early days of Wolf’s shutdown. Now it’s growing, a broadening fissure of faith in governance. Doesn’t help that it breaks along party lines: R’s pushing against restrictions; D’s pushing safety above all. Doesn’t help that Wolf labeled some local GOP elected officials “cowardly.” saying they’re giving up fighting the pandemic in favor of reopening against his orders. (Irony-blind House GOP leaders issued a statement: “Name calling is beneath the dignity of the office of the governor.” I don’t recall similar concerns about name-calling and the dignity of the office of the presidency.)

And when Wolf, during one his faux press conferences, was asked if calling elected officials who don’t agree with him cowards might sow greater political division, he dodged the question. He talked about trying to do the best he can, about the need to be careful and something about a viral resurgence in South Korea.

When the questioner managed to squeeze in a forbidden follow-up, asking if Wolf’s concerned about division, Wolf said, “I think we’re getting into multiple questions,” and an aide chimed in with a no-follow-up reminder. Accessibility with an asterisk. Same goes for information regarding nursing homes and personal care facilities.

House Speaker Mike Turzai publicized data he got from the Health Department showing the average age of those dying from coronavirus in Pennsylvania is

79. I asked why such info wasn't made public since it just might allay some anxiety among some people. I was told the department was still verifying the data. And Health Secretary Rachel Levine, when asked since so many nursing homes are such hot spots, why hasn't the department offered more detail, including locations within communities, she said, "We were waiting for federal government guidance."

Great, because if there's one entity that's shined throughout this crisis it's the federal government. In addition to transparency issues, there also are confusing divides. Governors, including Wolf, get good marks from constituents. [A Washington Post poll measuring performance](#) in dealing with the virus puts Wolf's approval rating at 72 percent: 90 percent among Democrats; about 50 percent among Republicans.

Yet a [Wall Street Journal-touted ranking](#) of governors gives Wolf and three other Democrats (New Jersey's Phil Murphy; Virginia's Ralph Northam, Wisconsin's Tony Evers) an "F" for "putting their states in the most economic peril." Meanwhile, [NIH honcho Dr. Anthony Fauci](#) says reopening too soon can mean "suffering and death that could be avoided."

Yet, [UPMC's Dr. Steven Shapiro](#), chief medical officer of Pennsylvania's massive health system, calls COVID-19 "a disease of the elderly, sick and poor," says cautious reopening is possible and that, "What we cannot do is extended social isolation." One way or the other, one side or the other could be validated soon, maybe even within a few weeks. As things stand, that could mean chaos or calm.

Or, maybe Wolf, legislative and local officials could actually meet, listen to each other, find areas of agreement, pledge to narrow the political divide and start providing the focused, unified leadership a public crisis requires. – **John Baer's column in Harrisburg Patriot-News**



Stay safe

