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**Philadelphia Inquirer**

A proposed plan could bring high-speed internet access to places across the four-county region.

**State Rep. Martin Causer**, R-Turtlepoint, has put forth legislation to establish the Rural Pennsylvania Broadband Deployment Act that would start a fund within the State Treasury to earmark federal and other funding for rural broadband/high-speed internet services. The bill is under consideration of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. “Access to high-speed internet is not a luxury but a necessity for our students and teachers, our farmers and business owners, and our doctors and patients,” Causer said in a prepared statement. “With the issue finally getting the attention it deserves, both the president and the governor have pledged funding to address broadband infrastructure, and we need to make sure those dollars are invested in communities like ours where they are needed the most.”

Much of the region is underserved, said Jim Swanson, director of information technology at North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission. Many pockets exist without internet across the area, he said. “This is a very good initiative. I’m very happy they’re taking this on because it has been talked about for a long time,” Swanson said. “It would be a substantial upgrade from what people have now.”

Under House Bill 2293, an advisory board part of the state Department of Community and Economic Development would investigate and make recommendations for the improved deployment of services and solicit, review and recommend proposals to use funding. “It is important to have the fund and advisory board in place to ensure dollars dedicated to rural broadband deployment are directed to the most underserved areas of the Commonwealth,” Causer said.

But without a taxpayer subsidy, broadband could go the way of cell phone coverage, cable television, natural gas lines and other services, Potter County Commissioner Paul Heimel said. The private sector won’t have enough motivation to financially back the expansion of broadband service, he said. A significant amount of fiber optic cable exists across McKean County for broadband services, Port Allegany Borough Manager Robert Veilleux said. “I think the bigger issue with broadband is what they call the ‘last mile’ where you actually get

**Female winners in Pa. primary whined their way to victory**

**Pennlive**  
**Op-ed: Philly,**  
**Pittsburgh House**  
**wins renewed the old tradition of Pa. socialism**

broadband to the more rural areas,” he said. “Some of these areas can’t get DSL or internet through a cable provider, and in some cases the topography makes satellite service impossible as well, which may leave internet service through a cellular carrier as the only option (if there is cellular service available).”

For businesses and residents, the availability of high-speed internet is crucial, no matter if it involves children being able to complete homework or a business being able to operate, Veilleux said. “Our nation and our state have a history of recognizing the importance of reaching underserved areas with essential services — rural electrification and highways as examples,” Heimel said. “Broadband has evolved from being a medium for entertainment and communications, to becoming a necessity for everything from communication and business connection to health care, and other essential services.”

Other rural broadband initiatives under consideration in the state House include completing an in-depth investigation and audit into the compliance of non-rural telecommunication carriers; creating a special bipartisan, bicameral legislative commission to recommend improvements of high-speed broadband services in unserved and underserved areas; inventorying state department, agency, commission or institution-owned communication towers, poles, buildings and facilities to leverage existing state-owned assets for the provisioning of high-speed broadband internet to unserved and underserved areas; and auditing the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s administration of the E-Fund, a six-year education technology program targeting network modernization plans. — ***Bradford Era***

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Media companies think they may have hit the jackpot with the Supreme Court’s ruling on sports betting. On Monday, the **Supreme Court struck down a federal law that prohibited sports gambling**, paving the way for states to make their own decisions about allowing legal betting on athletic events. The ruling has media and advertising executives envisioning a world in which more viewers tune into live televised sporting events and follow more sports coverage in great detail. Those more engaged fans would then attract more advertising dollars, including the marketing spending of gambling companies themselves, executives say.

Media companies are already tossing around programming ideas and ways to incorporate more stats and betting options on their digital platforms. The change could even **inflate the value of leagues, teams, sports media properties and sports TV rights deals**, executives say. Turner, the Time Warner Inc. division that includes TBS and TNT, could use its Bleacher Report site as a platform to program shows and stats for bettors and potentially partner with third-party online betting platforms, a person familiar with the company’s thinking said. “When disruption and change happens, it’s an opportunity,” said Turner President David Levy. Getting into the sports betting business “is a very big opportunity that every media company will have to look at.”

At ESPN’s presentation for advertisers Tuesday, executives and on-air talent expressed interest in sports betting as a phenomenon that could drive bigger audiences for sports programming. “It’s very early,” said ESPN President Jimmy Pitaro. “We’re actively monitoring and we are looking at the space...especially from a programming perspective.”

SportsCenter host Scott Van Pelt, who has a bettors-focused “Bad Beats” segment on his show, said that big TV networks could potentially create leagues, similar to fantasy sports. Networks could also program to bettors, for example, in the hour before NFL games when there are fewer people watching, he said. “The number of revenue streams that come out of this are endless,” he said in an interview. CBS’s chief advertising revenue officer, Jo Ann Ross, said that if gambling is legal, it could lead to the reintroduction of the ad-spending bonanza from fantasy-sports companies like FanDuel and DraftKings. “We’re always open for business,” said Ms. Ross.

The daily-fantasy sports companies at one point were a huge source of ad revenue for sports networks but have pulled back amid scrutiny over whether they violated gambling laws. (The companies insist their products don’t violate gambling laws because the games involve skill.) FanDuel spent \$189 million on U.S. advertising in 2015, a figure that fell to just \$10.7 million in 2016, according to Kantar Media. After spending \$247 million in 2015, DraftKings only shelled out \$18.4 million in 2016. Those figures were up slightly in 2017. The Kantar figures don’t include ad spending with some digital platforms.

FanDuel’s chief marketing officer, Mike Raffensperger, said there was “an enormous opportunity” to expand into sports betting after the Supreme Court’s ruling, but the company likely won’t shell out the same high levels of spending on commercials as it did three years ago. DraftKings said it has been preparing since 2017 to launch a sports-betting platform for mobile. Chief Business Officer Ezra Kucharz said he sees opportunities for more marketing spending and has also received more interest from advertisers in DraftKings’ platform.

More interest in games would be welcome news for TV networks. While the captive audiences for live sports are compelling for advertisers, sports programming hasn’t been immune to ratings declines as more consumers cut the cord and turn to new streaming services. “We do think gambling drives engagement and potentially could provide some viewership uptick,” said an ad buyer at a large media agency. The rollout of legal sports betting across the country will take time and isn’t guaranteed. The ruling applies to a case brought by New Jersey, and other states will have to consider the issue for themselves. Plus, states will need to sort out licensing, taxing and potential demands from leagues.

It’s too early to know how far-reaching sports betting will be, especially if not every state legalizes the activity, said Brian Wieser, a senior analyst at Pivotal Research Group. Also, there might be regulations preventing certain ads that mention gambling, he said. “I think it probably will lead to some incremental spending,” said Mr. Wieser.

The ruling has also sparked new potential bidders for Sports Illustrated, which is up for sale. Art Slusark, a spokesman for Meredith Corp, which owns Sports Illustrated, said that following the Supreme Court’s decision, Meredith “received several new inquiries from parties interested in the brand.” Mr. Slusark said Sports Illustrated reaches 50 million consumers each month via digital and print, an audience he described as “very appealing to anyone who would like to get their gambling products in front of a sports-oriented crowd.” He added that

the ruling could also lead to opportunities to attract new sponsors and partners.

One former sports executive said the rapid growth of fantasy-sports leagues spurred greater consumer interest in watching live sports, as well as more time spent online as fans tried to glean insights to help their picks. "It will take time, but going forward the decision will have a huge influence on sports media companies," this person said. — *Wall Street Journal*

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Some Southwestern Pennsylvanians say it every day. But to the state Republican Party, jagoff is a profanity.

The party blurred out the word in a tweet posted Wednesday showing a picture of a T-shirt that John Fetterman, the Democratic Party's nominee for lieutenant governor, sold during his campaign. The shirt said "Trump is a jagoff." The tweet notes Bernie Sanders endorsed Fetterman, who is the mayor of Braddock, and says "his rise included selling T-shirts with profanity-laced attacks on President Trump." A link to a donation page follows. — *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

