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Westmont Hilltop School District (Cambria Co.) pays $36,000 a year to link its schools onto one computer network. The district's shift to a two–school campus in 2017 could allow it to build its own faster one, drop that bill and cover the cost to do it after just a few years of savings, Westmont schools technology director Joseph Molnar told the board this week.

That's because the district is eligible for a 40 percent federal reimbursement off the $200,866 cost of the project. That would drop the price tag to approximately $120,500 to create a 1.9-mile fiberoptic Wide-Area Network between the district's Fair Oaks Drive middle/high school and future elementary school, he said.

Board officials are reviewing the project, which will be discussed at a 6 p.m. middle school meeting Thursday. "Right now, we're on a 1 gigabyte (per second) system through Atlantic Broadband, and we're paying $36,000 a year for it," Molnar said. He said the district could create its own through a fiberoptic line system, running it along 92 telephone poles that separate the two revamped schools the district will operate in 2017.

Westmont Hilltop would need to upgrade infrastructure at both ends to handle 10- or 20-gigabyte-per-second bandwidth, but that cost will be included in the district's project, said United Datacom Networks' Clyde Zimmerman, a federally approved vendor that would guide the project through construction. With students and faculty increasingly reliant on wireless devices in the classroom, those infrastructure upgrades are needed anyway, school administrators said.

Zimmerman said the district will need permission to run its network line on telephone poles – and that carries a $3 to $5 fee per pole. But that would be the only ongoing cost, as the

know

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district would undertake to develop its own fiber optic network, he said. "It'll serve your students very well for a long time, and at a reduced cost," Zimmerman said.

Molnar said funds to cover the cost could be pulled from the district's 2015-16 technology budget by continuing to delay computer upgrades. He said work could begin in June and would take at least a year to complete. Still, board members had questions about infrastructure costs and the process. They voted to table the matter Monday but could vote on its approval at the special meeting on Thursday. – ***Johnstown Tribune-Democrat***

Two former champions of small government and regulatory restraint—former Sens. John Breaux and Trent Lott—argue that "the Telecom Act of 1996 set in motion forces that have revolutionized telecommunications for American consumers." But they now advocate massive new federal regulation of the TV marketplace instead.

The Federal Communications Commission wants you, the consumer, to allow a new set-top box into your home that rearranges the programs you buy and inserts new advertising while tracking what you watch. Movie studios, labor unions and civil rights groups all oppose it. Why? Because this "All-Vid" proposal isn't about the box fees the senators-turned-lobbyists decry. Instead, it's all about appropriating content. Google and Amazon want to capture, repackage and profit from TV programming in their own competing services without having to pay for it.

Set-top boxes are about to go the way of the horse-drawn carriage and the corset. Households are ditching the old TV bundles entirely and getting "over the top" television through Apple, Roku and any number of other services. That's the kind of competition both senators voted for in 1996 and should support now. If Google, Amazon or anyone else wants to build a better set-top box, they can do so the way these services have—in a way that respects federal privacy laws and negotiated licensing agreements with program producers. Or they can actually license the content from creators, the way everybody else does, as opposed to demanding a gift from a captive FCC. – **Letter to the *Wall Street Journal* from Ev Ehrlich, Undersecretary of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce from 1993 to 1997**

A federal appeals court rebuked the Federal Communications Commission on Wednesday over the agency's yearslong delay in updating its media-ownership rules.

In a sharply worded ruling, the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia threatened to toss out the government's ownership rules altogether if the FCC doesn't get its effort on track. The opinion came in a broad legal challenge by broadcasters and others to the FCC's handling of media-ownership rules. Throwing out the rules would be "the administrative-law equivalent of burning down the house to roast the pig, and we decline to order it," said the opinion written by Judge Thomas Ambro. "However, we note that this remedy, while extreme, might be justified in the future if the Commission does not act quickly to carry out its legislative mandate."

The three-judge panel's ruling is likely to accelerate the FCC's efforts to update its rules, some of which are 40 years old. The rules at issue relate to control of local broadcast stations and newspapers. For example, one rule has long prohibited a single individual or company from possessing a daily newspaper and a radio or TV station in the same market.

Some broadcasters ask whether such restrictions still make sense, given that consumers in any location now have access to an array of content via the Internet. On the other side, activists warn against changes that would allow big media companies to amass extensive power. The FCC is required by Congress to review and update its media-ownership rules every four years, but the last one that the agency completed was in the 2006 cycle. The 2010 and 2014 cycles haven't been completed, the court noted.

The court concluded that the FCC's delays in updating its rules undermines the validity of another, related agency measure adopted in 2014. That move restricted the use of so-

called joint sales agreements by television stations to avoid some effects of the FCC's long-standing ownership limits. In addition, the court found the FCC had unreasonably delayed action on defining some standards related to minority and female broadcast ownership. It sent that matter back to the FCC with an order for it to act promptly.

The court's opinion underscores the intense infighting that has hampered adoption of new ownership rules on politically-powerful broadcasters. The growth of new media giants has raised contentious questions about the proper scope of media-ownership limits. "You're dealing here not just with the regulatory process in a time of changing technology, you're dealing with claims about the First Amendment and you're dealing with the difficult dilemma of promoting minority and female ownership," said Andrew Schwartzman, a Georgetown University law professor.

Some broadcasters have even urged deregulating ownership entirely, the appeals court noted. The National Association of Broadcasters said it "could not be more pleased" with the court's decision. "At long last, this opinion directs the FCC to do its job and adopt broadcast ownership rules that reflect the modern world," said executive Vice President Dennis Wharton.

The three-judge panel said delays in updating rules have left in place some restrictions—for example the newspaper-broadcast cross ownership rule—that date back to the mid-1970s, "even though the FCC determined more than a decade ago that it is no longer in the public interest." That has caused significant expense to businesses that might otherwise be able to combine, the court added.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler on Wednesday reiterated his goal to release a comprehensive media-ownership proposal by June 30. "I intend to stick with that," he told a news briefing following the FCC's regular monthly meeting. He cited the continuing controversy over the rules, however, noting that passage of a plan requires securing at least three commissioners' support. Republican members of the FCC suggested they don't expect the controversies to end soon. "I'm expecting to be underwhelmed" by Mr. Wheeler's proposal, said FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly. He said he expects that the commission will remain "stuck in this never-ending cycle." – ***Wall Street Journal***

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