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Atlantic Broadband announced that Wolf Furniture, a Blair County-based company with locations in central Pennsylvania, northern Maryland, and northern Virginia areas, has selected its services to provide fiber-based Dedicated Internet and Metro Ethernet to connect its corporate offices and satellite locations across the company's retail footprint. "Reliability, scalability and performance were key considerations in our decision to switch carriers," said Paul Edwards, IT Manager, Wolf Furniture. "Atlantic Broadband made building out connectivity from our corporate office to store locations an easy transition. The changes to our service included developing a robust connected network, and streamlining technology that enables our business to communicate efficiently. With Atlantic Broadband, we not only have the technical solutions in place to run operations, but we also have peace of mind in the performance of the service we're receiving, and a local customer support team we can count on." "We are thrilled to work with Wolf Furniture to streamline its operations, and provide the service and connectivity the company needs to run seamless operations across locations," said Curt Kosko, Atlantic Broadband's Vice President and General Manager, Pennsylvania. "Our customer is already seeing huge improvements, and we look forward to continuing to work with Wolf Furniture to further support its business efficiencies."

Atlantic Broadband also announced recently that both the Cleveland Hotel and Essex House Hotel, iconic South Beach properties in the Miami Beach Art Deco District, have selected Atlantic Broadband's Business Services to provide fiber-based Metro Ethernet with speeds up to 150 Mbps to connect both hotels' administrative offices, as well as to expand HD entertainment offerings in hotel common areas and guest rooms. "Through an underground fiber solution built by Atlantic Broadband, guests can now experience optimized Internet connectivity, and our office servers at both locations can communicate directly." , " said Tom Burchett, Chief Financial Officer & Chief Operating Officer, BRIO Investment Group, the management company for the Cleveland and Essex House Hotel properties. "With our locations right on the beach, the salt air has corroded previous Internet systems, so when Atlantic Broadband offered to install an underground solution that would provide us with reliability and longevity, we knew who to hire. And, they delivered the solutions on time. I couldn't be happier with the service Atlantic Broadband continues to provide to us as a business and to our guests." "Having both of these iconic hotels in our portfolio is a true testament to the continued growth in our Business Services offerings," said Dave Keefe, Atlantic Broadband's Senior Vice President and General

['Golden Age' Won't Last Because You're Not Watching Enough](#)

[Los Angeles Times Editorial: Charter-Time Warner Cable deal – We'll get the Dodgers, but what else?](#)

[zap2it.com Nielsen Top 25 Cable Program Ratings for Week Ending May 24](#)

[Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Santorum announces presidential run 'where my American story began'](#)

Manager, Florida. “We’re thrilled to work together with these properties to solve a major business issue, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Essex House and the Clevelander Hotel to further support its business efficiencies.” – *businesswire.com*

For 30 years, the federal government has helped millions of low-income Americans pay their phone bills, saying that telephone service is critical to summoning medical help, seeking work and, ultimately, climbing out of poverty. Now, the nation’s top communications regulator will propose offering those same people subsidized access to broadband Internet.

On Thursday, that regulator, Tom Wheeler, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, will circulate a plan to his fellow commissioners suggesting sweeping changes to a \$1.7 billion subsidy program charged with ensuring that all Americans have affordable access to advanced telecommunications services, according to senior agency officials. The effort is the F.C.C.’s strongest recognition yet that high-speed Internet access is as essential to economic well-being as good transportation and telephone service. Mr. Wheeler will propose potentially giving recipients a choice of phone service, Internet service or a mix of both, the officials said. He will also suggest new measures to curb fraud, a source of criticism in recent years.

While the plan is likely to secure the support of the F.C.C.’s Democratic majority in a vote next month, it is almost certain to also set off fierce debate in Washington. The subsidy program, Lifeline, has faced extensive scrutiny. And many of Mr. Wheeler’s previous actions, including his successful push to regulate broadband Internet as a public utility, have drawn indignation from opponents.

More than 12 million households now participate in Lifeline, which was created in 1985 by the Reagan administration to subsidize landline telephone service. In 2008, the program was extended to cover the cost of mobile phones. Enrollment rose sharply — as did abuse, with some households receiving more than their single allowed subsidy. To qualify, a household must have an income at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty line, or must participate in a program like Medicaid or food stamps.

Gene Kimmelman, who lobbied as a consumer advocate to create Lifeline, said the program was meant to keep people from having to choose between essentials like food, electricity and phone service. Now, he said, Internet access needed to be added to the list. “Broadband is every bit as important today as plain old phone service was 30 years ago,” said Mr. Kimmelman, a former Justice Department official who is now chief executive of Public Knowledge, a consumer advocacy group.

Mr. Wheeler’s proposal is an effort to bridge the so-called digital divide, the ever-widening economic and social inequalities of those with access to technology and those without it. In 2000, 3 percent of Americans had broadband at home, [according to Pew Research](#). In 2013, 70 percent did. But the adoption of broadband in low-income and minority households has not kept pace. According to [Pew data](#) from 2013, the most recent year for which numbers are available, 54 percent of those making less than \$30,000 a year have broadband, compared with 88 percent of those making more than \$75,000. The same survey found that 53 percent of Hispanics and 64 percent of blacks in the United States have high-speed Internet at home, compared with 74 percent of whites.

For recipients like Sharell Harmon, a 23-year-old single mother from Elkins, W.Va., the Lifeline program has made a big difference. “Without a phone, I couldn’t connect with my job, my kids’ doctors or their schools,” said Ms. Harmon, who works full time in construction while pursuing a college degree. “You don’t realize how many people you have to talk to until you can’t.”

Under her plan, she is entitled to 250 minutes of talk time and 1,000 text messages a month, limits she says she never comes close to crossing. But, Ms. Harmon said, she also needs high-speed Internet to feel fully connected and has struggled to pay her broadband bill. “Everything is online these days,” said Ms. Harmon, who said she supported any effort

to allow the subsidy to be applied to broadband. “I take classes online, do my schoolwork. My kids play math and phonics games.”

A vote on Mr. Wheeler’s proposal is expected on June 18, according to the senior agency officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were discussing a plan that had not yet been circulated among all five commissioners. If the plan wins majority approval, as expected, the antifraud measures would take effect soon after. The commission would then discuss the specifics of incorporating broadband into the program, and write rules to govern it. A final vote on the plan could come before the end of the year.

The Lifeline program offers each household a \$9.25 monthly subsidy toward the cost of service; it was not until 2008, when the benefit was extended to prepaid mobile phones, which cost less than landlines, that some phone connections became fully free for Lifeline recipients. Mr. Wheeler is proposing setting service standards, which could include a specified number of mobile minutes and minimum broadband speed. Debate over just how far a \$9.25 credit can go in covering the cost of broadband is sure to arise. The plan will almost certainly face strong criticism. Some Republicans recently expressed skepticism that the F.C.C. has fully rooted out abuse from the program. In April 2014, the Justice Department indicted three people on charges that they defrauded the agency of \$32 million in false Lifeline claims from September 2009 to March 2011.

In 2012, the F.C.C. instituted stricter safeguards, including the establishment of a database that crosschecked that no household received more than one subsidy. In March, the Government Accountability Office issued [a report](#) evaluating the effect of those changes. It said that the number of participating households had fallen to about 12 million in 2014 from about 18 million in 2012, suggesting more households were being held to one subsidy. “The reforms had some impact, but whether they’ve reduced all of the fraud, we can’t tell,” said Michael E. Clements, an acting director at the G.A.O. who helped write the report. Mr. Clements said that of the 11 primary reforms the F.C.C. had said it would make in 2012, four had yet to be completed, according to his office’s recent review.

In response to the report, Michael O’Rielly, a Republican commissioner on the F.C.C., called the Lifeline program “inefficient, costly and in serious need of review.” Mr. Wheeler’s push for new safeguards may be partly an effort to pre-emptively answer the program’s critics. Service providers currently must verify participants’ eligibility for Lifeline, and under the new plan, they would be required to keep proof of that eligibility and make it available if audited, senior F.C.C. officials said.

There has been speculation in Washington for months about changes to the program. A Senate subcommittee hearing is already scheduled for June 2 to examine its effectiveness and ways to prevent further abuse. The office of the senator who called the hearing, Roger Wicker, Republican of Mississippi, did not respond to repeated requests for comment. “The program has been under attack, and the F.C.C. is currently facing incredible political pressure,” said Michael Scurato, policy director of the National Hispanic Media Coalition. “It wasn’t always this contentious to make sure our neighbors in this country are connected to communications of the day.” – *New York Times*

After many misfires, Silicon Valley is once again betting it can transform television—this time by letting TVs run apps as diverse as those on smartphones. Google Inc. and Apple Inc. are urging software developers to show the kind of creativity on the big screen that they have on smartphones. The effort revolves around new set-top boxes and TV sets, which the technology companies are positioning as platforms for all manner of interactive experiences in addition to conventional television programming.

Google’s annual developer conference in San Francisco this week, known as I/O, is expected to showcase the new vision. The event marks a year since the Internet giant released its Android TV operating system, followed by the Nexus Player, a set-top box. TV manufacturers including Sony Corp. and Sharp Co. have adopted Android TV. In March,

chip maker Nvidia Corp. announced plans for an Android TV device called Shield, while Razer Inc. started selling its own device in early May. "Finally the Internet is about to change our TV," said Jen-Hsun Huang, Nvidia's chief executive. The living room, he said, is about to be "appified."

Apple is expected to up the ante on June 8 at its own developer conference, unveiling plans to open its Apple TV set-top box more broadly to app developers. Industry executives say they believe the company is working on an updated Apple TV that would boast a much more powerful processor. The chip would allow Apple TV to run games, potentially challenging game consoles such as Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox. Others expect an array of apps that will help TVs evolve into multifunction command centers for functions like food delivery, videoconferencing, dating, home automation and home security—as well as unexpected app categories that could have surprising effects, like Uber's impact on transportation.

Silicon Valley has been talking about interactive TV for more than two decades, but the results have fallen short of optimistic expectations. Some companies already sell devices that put apps on TV screens, mainly to deliver on-demand video, audio, or photos. Roku Inc. says it has more than 2,000 content services for its set-top box. Technological advances, including faster processors, are fueling hopes that TVs and set-top boxes can do much more. For starters, Nvidia's Mr. Huang and others say, they can help bring gaming to a broader audience by eliminating the need for dedicated gaming consoles.

Google's Android TV app store lists big-screen versions of games found on mobile devices, including Electronic Arts Inc.'s "NBA Jams" and Telltale Inc.'s "Game of Thrones." Nvidia, known for chips used to render graphics in high-end PC games, expects its Shield device to run more sophisticated software than the usual set-top box. The company in March demonstrated Shield, whose starting price will be \$199, running games such as Id Software's "Doom 3" and Crytek's "Crysis." It expects more than 50 games to be available for the device when it hits the market. Nvidia is expected to provide more details Thursday. Many hurdles remain for Silicon Valley's vision of TV, such as devising a big-screen user interface that consumers find attractive and easy to use, said Brett Sappington, director of research at Parks Associates, which tracks TV-related products.

Not everyone is a fan of Android TV. Samsung Electronics Co. and LG Electronics Inc., two of the largest TV makers, don't currently use Google's operating system for their app-capable sets. Though Android TV has potential, "Google needs to improve the interface," said Daniel Matte, an analyst at research firm Canalys. He cites other areas for improvement, such as how the apps show up on the display, and said users should have a more intuitive way to view content options.

Google is trying to make Android TV more attractive by adding more TV shows and movies to its Play app store, which will be displayed prominently on the home screens of Android TV displays, according to a person familiar with the matter. The Internet giant also is developing promotions for movies and TV shows to help content providers attract online customers. In May, Google Play teamed up with "Mad Men" producer Lions Gate Entertainment Corp. on an interactive, multimedia website to celebrate the end of the hit TV series. The site offered the first episode of the show's first season free of charge for a limited time.

Last week, Sling TV, the Internet TV service run by Dish Network, launched an Android TV app that provides channels including Disney Channel, AMC and ESPN for \$20 per month. Google is trying to keep up with content offerings from Apple, which started delivering a version of the HBO Now streaming service earlier this year via an app for the iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch, or on Apple TVs, iTunes. Apple has also negotiated with programmers to launch an Internet TV service later this year.

Google's interest in games and other apps is expected to be a major theme at the I/O conference, with 10 sessions focused on either developing apps and games for big screens

or adapting them for TVs. Developer Eric Froemling said Google contacted him in 2014 to make a version of his mobile game "Bomb Squad" for Android TV, and he got it ready ahead of the platform's launch at last year's I/O. Well over 90% of Bomb Squad users play the game on mobile devices, rather than Android TV, he said. But he hopes new Android TV devices coming this year from Sony and Nvidia will get more people playing games on TVs. "Hopefully it will become more of a real thing and less of a curiosity," he said.

Razer has an online portal to help developers make games for its Android TV set-top box, called Forge TV, and it sends them the gadget for testing. Developers can take an existing Android smartphone app or game and make only small changes, such as adding support for game controllers and tweaking the resolution to fit larger screens, to make them work on Android TV, according to Kevin Sather, Razer's global director of product marketing. "The more devices that are out there, the more the developer community will get excited and provide content for this platform," Mr. Sather said. "We're expecting to see the number of games grow very quickly." – *Wall Street Journal*

State Senator Matt Smith, a Democrat representing the 37th district, is set to resign his seat in the legislature. Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa announced Smith will be stepping down to take over as President of the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce.

Smith's district consists of Allegheny and Washington Counties. He has served since as State Senator since 2013. Before that, he represented the 42nd district in the PA House from 2007 to 2012. "For the past three years, Sen. Smith has served as a thoughtful and distinguished member of the Senate Democratic Caucus and was an advocate for hardworking people all across Allegheny and Washington counties," Sen. Costa said. "He is a man of great integrity, whose background makes him the ideal candidate to serve as the President of the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber."

"Matt has earned the respect of everyone who knows and has worked with him," he continued. "This position will give Matt the opportunity to expand on his record of public service and build from his years of work in the House and the Senate." "Matt was a catalyst for change within the Senate and had a firm grasp on issues of importance to his constituents. He will be sorely missed by the entire caucus," Sen. Costa concluded. "Our loss is truly the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce's gain."

"It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the people of the commonwealth and represent the residents of the 37th Senatorial District," outgoing Sen. Smith responded. "I would like to thank my constituents for entrusting me to be their advocate in the district and at the state level, and want them to know that even as I leave public office I will continue to work to make our region stronger and prepare our workforce to compete in the 21st century economy. I would also like to thank Sen. Costa and all of my Senate colleagues for their partnership and support during my time in the Senate and as I transition into this new role." No plans have been made so far to fill Sen. Smith's seat. – *politicspa.com*



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