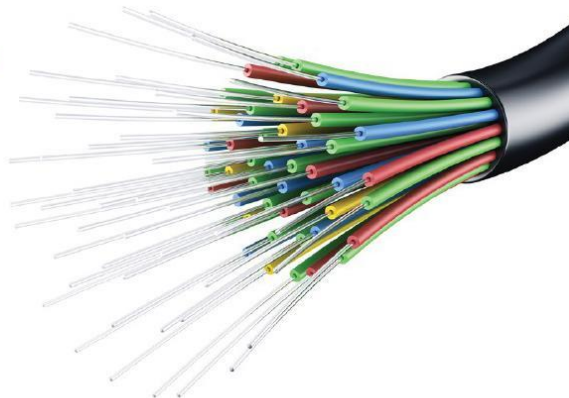


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**May 29, 2020**

#### **Protocol**

**Coronavirus sent us home. Will VR bring us back together?**

**Washington Post**  
**Trump signs order that could punish social media companies for how they police content, drawing criticism and doubts of legality**

**TVNewsCheck**  
**Trump Wants FCC To Join Twitter Crackdown**

**USA Today**  
**AT&T to credit DirectTV with MLB Extra Innings and MLS Direct Kick subscriptions**

Sullivan County's government is looking for money to expand broadband service within its borders. The county applied for a \$1.2 million grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission this spring, a regional development corporation sponsored by the federal government. "If we're awarded the grant, we would put a (request for proposals) out for companies to bid on a section of the line," said Donna Iannone, Sullivan County commissioner.

Any broadband expansion will require grant funding, because no private service provider is going to build a line that isn't profitable. "They don't have enough customers per mile to justify their cost," Iannone said. "Hopefully we'll have several bids and get the best project we can." The air and auto museum in Eagles Mere needs an internet upgrade to take credit cards, Iannone said. That's one example of how spotty high-speed internet service affects commerce in Sullivan County, home to less than 6,500 people at the 2010 census.

There are some fiber optic lines laid in the county, including one for 9-1-1 service to Hillsgrove. Many of them aren't "lit up" for service though, Iannone said. River Valley Internet, out of Montoursville, will also be doing a test project using "whitespace" on the radio frequency band to deliver wireless internet. That technology will meet the "25/3" minimum standard that the federal government holds for megabyte download and upload speed for users. The county will find out about the Appalachian Regional Commission grant in October, at the earliest. – **NorthcentralPA.com**

**The Hill**  
**Voting rights, public health officials roll out guidelines to protect voters from COVID-19**

**New York Times**  
**Facebook and Its Secret Policies**

**Philadelphia Inquirer**  
**Bucks County just went to court to extend Pennsylvania's mail ballot deadline**

**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**  
**Editorial: No time for politics – GOP lawmaker tested positive, but Dems weren't told**

**Pittsburgh Tribune-Review**  
**Editorial: Pennsylvania budget not done**

State House Republicans, joined by some Democrats, voted late Thursday night to end the statewide business shutdown imposed by Democrat Gov. Tom Wolf in March as coronavirus was spreading across the state. The chamber's approval of a resolution that would undo Wolf's closure of non-life-sustaining businesses during the pandemic will now go to the Republican-led state Senate for consideration. A statement issued by a spokesman for House Democrats called the move an "empty gesture" and that under the Constitution, the resolution would have to be signed by Wolf to take effect. The spokesman said that would not happen.

All Republicans and eight Democrats in the 203-member chamber voted for the resolution, but the 117 votes in favor of it fell short of the two-thirds majority that would be needed to override a Wolf veto. A spokeswoman for Wolf did not immediately respond to an inquiry early Friday. In a written statement, House Majority Leader Rep. Bryan Cutler said the resolution leaves in place the state's emergency declaration and ensures nursing homes and long-term care facilities will get needed assistance. "Schools are not teaching; jobs are not paying; and government is not working for the people. The best step for all residents of our state is to allow workers, employers and nonprofits the ability to safely resume their work," Cutler said.

Later in the day, Wolf is expected to hold his first in-person press conference with reporters in more than two months. More than 100,000 people have died in the U.S. from coronavirus, including more than 5,000 in Pennsylvania. The first cases were reported in Pennsylvania on March 6. Wolf's shutdown order to non-life-sustaining businesses with a threat of enforcement was issued March 19.

His administration has said the shutdown order and other virus-mitigation measures have saved thousands of lives. In recent weeks, as his color-coded plan lifting virus restrictions has been implemented, pushback from people and businesses still under restrictions has increased. On Thursday, lawmakers received a letter from more than 20 officials of chambers of commerce across eastern Pennsylvania, including the Lehigh Valley, [that pushed for a quicker reopening](#). – ***Allentown Morning Call***

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Three of the nation's largest pay-TV companies are taking joint ownership of a platform designed to make it easier for brands to harness data to serve targeted ads to people watching cable TV, a move that comes as cost-pressured ad buyers are increasingly turning to targeted advertising. Comcast Corp. is spinning off its Blockgraph LLC unit and selling two-thirds of it to Charter Communications Inc. and ViacomCBS Inc. in an effort to give greater scale to ad buyers relying on the platform. Each company will own one-third of Blockgraph as a result of the deal, which the three partners were expected to announce Friday. Financial terms weren't disclosed.

Targeted advertising—serving specific ads to specific viewers based on their interests, demographics and consumption habits—has been widespread on websites and online-video services for years, but is still in its infancy when it comes to traditional TV, where advertisers have fewer opportunities to gather information about viewers consuming TV from a living-room set-top box than they would from a smartphone or a computer.

Blockgraph acts as a service that helps brands and ad-inventory sellers match data sets without sharing too much personal data on the viewers, the company says. For instance, if a car maker buys a data set of people in the market for a car, it could use Blockgraph's technology to match that list up with cable subscribers based on their home address, Blockgraph Chief Executive Jason Manningham said. The car company could use this data either to learn which programs and time of day draw more viewers from their desired audience, or to buy ads targeted only at households on the in-market list. "For the ad buyer, it's really about scale and simplicity," Mr. Manningham said. As a joint venture, Blockgraph provides "a massive scale of inventory that can now be unlocked."

Privacy restrictions have served as an obstacle to the growth of targeted TV advertising because data matches often rely on personally-identifying data such as viewers' home address. Comcast and Charter are the country's two largest cable companies, accounting for nearly half of U.S. TV and broadband households, and ViacomCBS is one of the largest owners of cable and broadcast channels.

The joint venture is launching at a precarious moment in the TV ad market, when the coronavirus pandemic has many brands cutting their marketing budgets and thinking more strategically about ad placements. The pandemic has prompted marketers to [walk back their planned TV ad-spending commitments](#) and think more strategically about advertising expenditures.

– **Wall Street Journal**

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A basic rule in the media business is to go where the customers are. It's something AT&T needs to keep in mind as it dramatically ramps up its streaming efforts. AT&T has an awful lot of customers already. More than 169 million subscribe to its wireless services, and more than 19 million households use its TV services. But the new Hollywood titan still needs to play ball with others—especially as it looks to get its new HBO Max service off the ground. This was underscored Wednesday, when the [formal launch of the service](#) was accompanied by a surprise announcement of an agreement with archrival Comcast, which will offer HBO Max to its cable customers.

But other agreements have yet to fall into place. At the launch, HBO Max wasn't yet available on streaming platforms operated by Amazon.com and Roku, due to business disagreements between the three. The companies say discussions are ongoing, so the impasse may not last long. And it's not the first time tech giants have clashed over streaming: Amazon and Google [had a dispute in 2017](#) that for a time kept Amazon devices from accessing YouTube, while Google's Chromecast users were unable to play video content from Amazon's Prime service.

The current row between AT&T, Amazon and Roku will also likely be resolved. The two platforms combined [power a majority of connected TVs](#) on the market; Roku alone will account for about 47% this year according to estimates from eMarketer. That makes Roku and Amazon key players in the market for TV viewers who have cut the cable cord—a market no streaming aspirant can afford to do without. But the dispute also serves to remind that the red-hot streaming TV market is also becoming a hot mess. As more [Netflix](#) competitors flood in, they are bringing an array of services with different programs and pricing tiers, sold differently through different platforms. All have their attractive points. HBO Max offers the popular library of its namesake's TV shows plus a large library of other content.

But HBO Max is also now just one among a sea of streaming apps offering compelling content. And more are on the way, including Comcast's own Peacock service launching next month. In a crowded marketplace, even a well-regarded brand like HBO can't afford to be hard to find. – **Wall Street Journal**

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The already fraught political fight over the coronavirus in Pennsylvania reached a fever pitch this week.

Democratic lawmakers in Pennsylvania voiced growing outrage Thursday after the belated revelation that one of their Republican colleagues had [tested positive for the coronavirus](#). Allegations of a cover-up prompted calls for the top GOP House leader to resign and even a push for an official investigation, although that prospect was quickly shot down by the state's top law enforcement official.

Lawmakers learned Wednesday that State Rep. Andrew Lewis (R., Dauphin) had tested positive a full week earlier, on May 20. Lewis said that he immediately began self-isolating after receiving the test result, and that he informed House officials, who worked to identify anyone he may have exposed.

But while some Republican lawmakers have confirmed being notified of their potential exposure and self-isolating as a result, Democrats say they only learned of it from a reporter — despite their daily proximity to Lewis. The timing of the disclosure continued to fuel anger Thursday, both on the House floor and on social media, raising the stakes on an already heated partisan split over how to responsibly legislate during the pandemic.

Rep. Kevin Boyle (D., Philadelphia) sent a letter late Wednesday to state Attorney General Josh Shapiro seeking an investigation into what he called a failure to notify lawmakers and staff of the positive test, as required under guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Shapiro on Thursday said he does not believe a criminal investigation is warranted but called the allegations “disappointing.” “It is critical that public officials lead by example and demonstrate common decency during this crisis by following public health guidelines and being transparent with their colleagues and the Department of Health,” Shapiro said.

The legislature passed temporary rules in March allowing its members to vote remotely. In the House, the change allows lawmakers to submit votes to their party leaders. But those leaders and committee chairs still need to go to the Capitol to formally consider any legislation. Many Republicans have opted to travel to the Capitol to vote in person, and a number of them have eschewed wearing face masks, following President Donald Trump in bucking guidance from public health officials. That includes State Rep. Russ Diamond (R., Lebanon), one of at least two House members who were notified they had to self-quarantine after Lewis tested positive for the virus.

Diamond was also among a handful of lawmakers who attended rallies on the steps of the state Capitol over the last two months, where hundreds of protesters, many standing shoulder to shoulder without wearing face masks, pushed for a swifter reopening of the state’s economy. At least one other lawmaker was directed to self-quarantine after being exposed to Lewis: Rep. Frank Ryan, a Republican from Lebanon County. Lewis has said he kept his diagnosis private “out of respect for my family, and those who I may have exposed.”

Mike Straub, a spokesperson for House Republicans, has said officials followed state and federal guidelines requiring employers to identify employees who were in close contact (within about 6 feet) with a person with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19. Lewis had last been at the Capitol on May 14, so those in isolation ended their quarantine Thursday. “Absolutely anyone, from anywhere in the Capitol, who may have been exposed within those guidelines was notified,” Straub said.

But since an incubation period lasts two to 14 days, Democrats pointed out that Lewis could have been infectious as early as May 4. He attended sessions in person the weeks of May 4 and May 12. Republicans have countered that the House, through its human resources department, followed contact tracing precautions and notified those people Lewis had come in contact with. That it happened to be Republicans was simply because that is who Lewis had interacted with, said House Majority Leader Bryan Cutler (R., Lancaster). “It was an element of timing, it was not by partisan design,” Cutler said on the House floor Thursday. “You only contact-trace individuals who had been in contact.”

Cutler said the legislature is also bound by a medical privacy law known as HIPAA. House leaders have cited the law in defending their decision not to disclose even the number of people who were directed to self-

quarantine. Democrats on Thursday said they're not after names but general information when a member or staffer tests positive. Tensions in the chamber were already high, with disagreements over how to best respond to the pandemic largely drawn along partisan and geographic lines.

Democrats concerned with the death toll in hard-hit Philadelphia and Southeastern Pennsylvania have clashed with Republicans frustrated with the economic devastation in less affected areas, which they blame in part on Gov. Tom Wolf's shutdown orders. But the anger this week reached a new level.

Rep. Brian Sims, who sits on a House committee with Lewis, posted [an impassioned 11-minute video on Facebook](#) late Wednesday ripping Republicans. It had more than one million views as of Thursday. And on the House floor Thursday, Sims excoriated Republicans for keeping Democrats in the dark for a full week about Lewis' condition, and took the rare step of calling out House Speaker Mike Turzai (R., Allegheny) and asking for his resignation. "To pick the two or three people that you think might have been most exposed and to secretly tell them while the rest of us didn't have the benefit of protecting our families, protecting our friends, protecting our own health is criminal," Sims said.

Turzai said he was not informed about Lewis. "We are not using this facility to make these kinds of statements," said Turzai, who later added that had he been infected, he would have disclosed it and believes all legislators should follow the same protocol. He said he would support a change in the chamber's rules to require members to self-disclose. Earlier, Rep. Rob Matzie, a Democrat representing Allegheny and Beaver Counties, echoed that pledge. "We're held to a higher standard as elected officials on everything we do," Matzie said. "I have to believe that if Ben Franklin had COVID-19, he'd tell everyone." – **Spotlight PA**

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Just days before Tuesday's primary election, a federal judge has ordered Pennsylvania officials to make a last-minute albeit "imperfect" change to enable blind and vision-impaired people to effectively cast their ballots. U.S. Middle District Judge Jennifer P. Wilson 's decision requires the Department of State to provide "Accessible Write-In Ballot" forms that will allow those voters to cast ballots by mail and avoid going to the polls during the coronavirus pandemic.

That means visually impaired voters will have the same option as other voters who can avoid the polls and the risk of COVID-29 contagion. Wilson issued her ruling a week after the [National Federation of the Blind filed a civil rights suit against the state](#), claiming the mail-in ballots being provided for the primary were not adequate for blind voters and so breached their voting rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The federation said it had been warning state officials about the problem for months.

Wilson granted the group's request for a preliminary injunction requiring the state to provide suitable ballots for its constituents. She did not, however, order state officials to use the ballot preferred by the federation. The federation lobbied for use of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act ballot that is available to military personnel stationed outside the U.S. That ballot was used by Michigan when it had to make a last-minute adaptation for the blind during its primary last month. Wilson said the tight time frame makes the Accessible Write-In Ballot the better option for Pennsylvania. "The court believes it is more equitable to order a feasible and moderately adequate remedy over no remedy at all," she wrote. – **Pennlive**

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Clout pop quiz: Name the six Democrats running in Tuesday's primary election for auditor general in Pennsylvania.



We understand if you could only name one or two, or maybe none of them, even if this is the most competitive statewide race on the ballot. The office just doesn't attract much attention. Which brings us to Nina Ahmad's million-dollar bet.

Ahmad, a [former Philadelphia deputy mayor](#) seeking the nomination, has sunk \$1,090,773 in the last two years into two races for relatively obscure offices — \$655,835 for lieutenant governor in 2018 and now \$434,938 for auditor general. "Unfortunately, it is obscure," she said of the office, which serves as a fiscal watchdog for state agencies and programs. "But that doesn't make it unimportant or less expensive to run statewide to communicate to voters."

Ahmad, who moved to the United States from Bangladesh in 1980 and became a citizen nine years later, knows a statewide office can launch future campaigns. She also knows that just five women have [been elected to statewide executive offices](#) in Pennsylvania in the last 66 years. "And no person of color has ever been nominated by the Democratic Party statewide for executive office," she said. "And the reason is, we are usually under-resourced and not backed by the establishment." So Ahmad and her husband, real estate developer Ahsan Nasratullah, are spending big.

Pennsylvania's vast size and expensive television markets drive up the costs for candidates who lack name recognition. Ahmad has spent \$532,026 on broadcast and cable television campaign advertising, according to the ad-tracking firm Advertising Analytics. Michael Lamb, the [four-term Pittsburgh city controller](#), trails her in resources. He has spent \$143,870 on television. Rose Marie Davis, a [certified public accountant](#) from Monroe County, has spent \$1,004 on television.

The other Democrats haven't spent any money on TV, according to Advertising Analytics. They are seven-term State Rep. Scott Conklin [of Centre County](#); Tracie Fountain, a certified public accountant who has [served in the Auditor General's Office](#) for three decades; and Christina Hartman, [a nonprofit executive](#) from Lancaster County who ran for the U.S. House in 2016.

Ahmad, Conklin, and Lamb appear to have the strongest name recognition. Some political watchers wonder if voters will treat this race like a statewide judicial contest with little-known candidates. The candidate with the first ballot position in those races has an advantage. Conklin holds that spot. The primary looks like the real challenge this year. Republican Timothy DeFoor, the [two-term Dauphin County controller](#), reported having just \$2,385 in the bank when the latest campaign finance reports were due last Friday. — **Chris Brennan's "Clout" column in *Philadelphia Daily News***



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