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July 29, 2020

**Politico**  
**Zuckerberg:**  
**Facebook has 'more**  
**to do' on fighting**  
**disinformation**

**New York Times**  
**Reese Schonfeld, a**  
**Founder of CNN and**  
**Food Network, Dies**  
**at 88**

**Jezebel**  
**This Bumbling New**  
**Start-Up Helps**  
**Conservative**  
**Websites Store Use**  
**Names, Postal**  
**Addresses of**  
**Anonymous**  
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**Deadline Hollywood**  
**PBS Launching PBS**  
**Documentaries**  
**Channel On Prime**  
**Video Aug. 4**

Access to high-speed internet has become vital to families across Pennsylvania. This is more evident with so many people working from home and more schools providing online education because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone deserves access to high speed internet whether you live on a farm in Greene County or in high-rise in Philadelphia.

In order to help families living in our underserved and unserved areas, I will be introducing legislation which would provide \$50 million from the federal CARES Act to expand access to broadband internet. The bill will create a grant program overseen by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and ensure that monies are used to improve infrastructure and enable families to obtain access to broadband. DCED will determine unserved and underserved areas and award the grants under the program.

I ask that you support this legislation and help give families and communities across Pennsylvania fair and equal access to broadband internet. We cannot continue to allow our rural communities and underserved urban areas to keep falling behind when internet access, now more than ever, is so important to our everyday lives. -- **Memo distributed Tuesday to PA House members from Rep. Pam Snyder (D-Greene)**

Big Tech will come under the glare of a national spotlight Wednesday, as four of its leaders face questions from members of Congress aiming to rein in what they believe is excessive power in the hands of a few giant companies. The chief executives— Amazon. com Inc.'s Jeff Bezos, Apple Inc.'s Tim Cook,

**Associated Press**  
**Campaigns bring**  
**dueling messages to**  
**Pennsylvania this**  
**week**

**Pennlive**  
**Plaques about the**  
**crimes of former Pa.**  
**House leaders**  
**disappear from their**  
**Capitol portraits**

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**automatic voter**  
**registration before**  
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**but Pennsylvania**  
**Republicans have an**  
**important advantage**  
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Facebook Inc.'s Mark Zuckerberg and Google's Sundar Pichai—are set to appear before the House Antitrust Subcommittee investigating the market [dominance of online platforms](#).

Their testimony could help build public pressure for government action, especially if the back-and-forth with lawmakers raises new concerns about the way the big technology companies operate. “These platforms have been allowed to run wild and free from really any constraints,” Rep. David Cicilline (D., R.I.), the subcommittee chairman, said in an interview. “The responsibility we have is to make clear what the impacts are of the lack of competition in the digital marketplace.”

For the CEOs, it is a chance to make the case that their success derives not from monopoly power, but from their ability to meet consumer needs. In statements released late Tuesday, Mr. Bezos, Mr. Zuckerberg and Mr. Pichai, who is also CEO of Google's parent Alphabet Inc., emphasized the competition their companies face, as well as their contributions to the U.S. economy. “Although people around the world use our products, Facebook is a proudly American company,” Mr. Zuckerberg said. “We believe in values—democracy, competition, inclusion and free expression—that the American economy was built on.”

Mr. Bezos cited his own upbringing, saying it taught him grit and self-reliance, and cited competition Amazon faces from retailers in the U.S. and globally. Mr. Pichai underscored Google's numerous contributions to helping make consumers and small businesses more efficient and competitive, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic. Mr. Cook is set to tell lawmakers Apple is “a uniquely American company” that “does not have a dominant market share in any market where we do business.”

All the CEOs except Mr. Bezos have previously appeared before Congress. While it isn't uncommon for executives from an industry to testify together—big bank leaders did so last year—it is rarer for a congressional inquiry to come at such a high point in an industry's success. As of Monday, the four companies and Microsoft Corp. represented the five most valuable U.S. companies. Democrats have generally been most critical of the market power of big technology companies, but some Republicans have also expressed concerns—including whether existing antitrust laws are outdated in the internet age.

In dealing with rival companies, some tech giants often act in a predatory fashion, said Rep. Ken Buck (R., Colo.). “They are doing it in a way that's designed to reduce competition,” Mr. Buck said in an interview. “As it appears to me now, there's a need for action and for updating the law.” Other Republicans on the subcommittee are more likely to focus on what they view as anticonservative bias among some of the platforms, a charge the companies generally dispute. Despite the hearing's topic, lawmakers can ask whatever they wish. Both parties have criticized how the companies regulate content on their platforms, with Republicans often charging censorship and many Democrats worried about foreign election interference.

The format of Wednesday's hearing could work to the advantage of the witnesses. The executives will testify simultaneously rather than individually—an outcome the companies sought—which could blunt sustained pressure on any one witness. It will also occur via video-chat because of [the coronavirus pandemic](#). Instead of a crowded hearing room, the CEOs will testify from a place of their choosing.

At the same time, the hearing comes with the companies under scrutiny by one or more of the authorities empowered to enforce antitrust laws: the Justice Department, Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general. The subcommittee has been running its own yearlong probe and lawmakers have more than one million documents gathered from the companies and their competitors, including the executives' own emails, congressional aides say.

All that could make the questioning feel more like an interrogation. Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D., Wash.), who sits on the panel, said members have spent hours in briefings about the companies and might conduct dry runs practicing their questions. Staffers have told outsiders the hearing could last five hours or more, with each lawmaker having multiple opportunities to ask questions. “We don’t want anyone to feel left out,” Ms. Jayapal quipped.

The CEOs’ preparations have included speaking with lawmakers, as is typical for high-profile hearings. Mr. Cicilline said last week he had conversations scheduled with Messrs. Zuckerberg, Cook and Pichai. Matt Perault, a Duke University professor who testified before the subcommittee last year while working at Facebook, recalled preparing with hours of talking-point briefings and mock interrogations. He remembered receiving this advice: “It’s basically impossible to win. You’re trying not to lose.”

Mr. Zuckerberg views the stakes for the hearing as high for himself and for Facebook, and has been preparing with a tight circle of confidants and congressional experts, according to people familiar with the efforts. Among the concerns, these people said, are questions about the potential divestiture of prime assets Instagram and WhatsApp, and about the perception that Facebook lacks the ability to govern its sizable platforms. Facebook faces multiple antitrust probes focusing in part on its acquisition of potential rivals. None of the investigations appears to be on a fast track, although the FTC is laying the groundwork for depositions of company executives.

Amazon’s retail opponents have been lobbying lawmakers to ask Mr. Bezos about counterfeit products, competition with third-party sellers on the Amazon marketplace, and other issues. Amazon initially resisted agreeing to let Mr. Bezos testify before Congress, according to people familiar with the matter. The company relented after senior lawmakers publicly demanded he testify, citing a Wall Street Journal report in April that Amazon employees [used data from the platform’s sellers to develop competing products](#).

The FTC and some U.S. states have met with Amazon critics to discuss its market power, according to people familiar with the matter, but neither the company nor the regulators have disclosed a formal investigation. The antitrust probes into Google are the most advanced, with the Justice Department expected to file suit this summer. Investigators have focused on the company’s dominance of online advertising and search, both topics likely to come up Wednesday.

Apple also resisted personal testimony by Mr. Cook, according to a person familiar with the matter. He has sought to distinguish Apple by emphasizing that its business model is less reliant on consumers’ personal data. The Justice Department is probing Apple’s App Store practices, people familiar with the matter have said. Rivals say the company acts anticompetitively in the store, extracting unfair payments and favoring its own products. Last week, Apple promoted a study concluding [the fees app developers pay are in line](#) with those charged elsewhere.

Earlier public hearings offer clues about evidence lawmakers might use to put the CEOs on the spot. At a January congressional hearing with smaller companies, the founder of mobile-phone accessory maker PopSockets LLC said he had [evidence of Amazon bullying third-party sellers](#). Columbia University law professor Timothy Wu, who has called for breaking up Facebook, urged the lawmakers last summer to subpoena Mr. Zuckerberg’s emails discussing the 2012 acquisition of Instagram—a request that was among those sent to the company months later. — **Wall Street Journal** [Watch the hearing live at 12:00 Noon ET on C-SPAN 3](#)

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Movies will play in theaters for much less time before moving to home video under a new agreement between theater chain AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc. and Universal Pictures, upending the way Hollywood has done business for decades. Under the deal, the “theatrical window” will shorten to 17

days, from the current 75, at least when it comes to movies made by Comcast Corp.'s Universal that play at AMC theaters, the world's biggest movie-theater chain. That means that instead of waiting 2½ months to watch a new movie at home, viewers will be able to see at least some titles just 2½ weeks after they premiere in theaters.

The deal settles a [public spat between the two companies](#) over how soon new films should be allowed to appear on digital platforms. AMC in April [said it wouldn't play any Universal releases](#) after the studio used mass theater closures amid the coronavirus pandemic as an impetus to release "Trolls World Tour" directly online and said it would continue experimenting with such a strategy.

The argument was essentially academic since most theaters have been closed since mid-March because of the coronavirus pandemic. Amid those closures, Universal [made "Trolls World Tour" available as a \\$20 online rental](#) on April 10, the day it had been scheduled to open in theaters. Such a seismic shift in the dealings between the world's largest theater chain and one of Hollywood's leading studios is likely to put pressure on rivals of both companies to follow suit.

Movie theaters have long considered it essential for their businesses to be able to play movies exclusively before consumers can watch them other ways. Studios have long pushed to shorten that exclusive period because it would allow them to avoid mounting two costly marketing campaigns months apart for the same movie, and to expand the potential audience for new releases by luring viewers who can't or don't want to leave home.

After Universal's online release of the "Trolls" sequel [racked up nearly \\$100 million in digital revenue](#) in three weeks, the studio said it planned to continue experimenting with releasing some new films directly to digital platforms such as Apple Inc.'s iTunes and Amazon.com Inc. Even though movies traditionally generate the bulk of their box-office revenue in the first few weeks of playing in theaters, exhibitors have staunchly defended their exclusive windows, fearing that if films are made available online prematurely, customers would have little incentive to see new movies in theaters. The tension dates back at least to the DVD era. Studios have [gradually chipped away](#) at the exclusive theatrical window, but attempts to eliminate it altogether have rarely gained traction, other than for some relatively low-profile releases from small studios, typically playing in cinemas that aren't part of the biggest chains.

In a written statement, AMC Chief Executive Adam Aron said the company "enthusiastically embraces this new industry model," which will include generating additional revenue by offering new Universal releases on its own streaming platform, AMC Theatres On Demand. AMC also succeeded in negotiating a share of the revenue new Universal movies will earn from digital rentals purchased on other platforms such as Apple TV and Amazon's website, according to a person familiar with the matter. The companies said the complete terms of their deal are confidential and won't be disclosed.

Most movie theaters have [endured a monthslong shutdown](#) as governments around the world seek to curb the spread of the new coronavirus by limiting public gatherings. Hollywood's major studios, in turn, have been forced to adapt. Studios have repeatedly delayed some releases. Walt Disney Co. recently said it was delaying its live-action "Mulan" remake for the third time – this time indefinitely. AT&T Inc.'s Warner Bros. moved the U.S. debut of "Tenet" to early September, in a limited number of locations, after postponing the release three times. Other films have moved directly to premium-video-on-demand, or PVOD, or other online platforms. Warner Bros. released the family film "Scoob!" online rather than wait for theaters to reopen, while Universal also recently debuted the R-rated comedy "The King of Staten Island" on digital rental platforms.

Disney went a step further with "Artemis Fowl," skipping not only theaters but even online rental platforms, instead [rushing it straight to its new subscription](#)



[streaming service, Disney+](#). The about-face by AMC highlights the way the [Covid-19 pandemic has put pressure](#) on all kinds of businesses to [adjust their strategies](#). With reopening dates for U.S. theaters pushing further and further back on the calendar, movie studios and exhibitors are looking for ways to eke out revenue from homebound consumers. AMC currently plans to reopen its domestic theaters in mid- to late August.

Movies that Universal releases early online will be available only as premium-priced rentals, the same approach it took with “Trolls World Tour.” The company said it isn’t changing the amount of time consumers will need to wait for those titles to appear as standard-priced online sales or rentals. Mr. Aron, AMC’s chief executive, also pointed out in his statement that the 17-day theatrical window means Universal titles will play exclusively in theaters for three full weekends—the period most movies make the bulk of their ticket sales—before moving online. AMC and Universal will also be discussing international distribution strategy for regions such as Europe and the Middle East, the companies said. – ***Wall Street Journal***

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With a new school year approaching, the U.S. faces an educational crisis. Though the Trump administration wants a full reopening of K-12 schools, not all states and school districts are going along. Millions of students will still attend classes remotely, at least part of the time, and many may stay home until coronavirus vaccines are widely available.

Such a prolonged absence from the classroom will harm students of all ages and abilities. For those who lack reliable access to computers and high-speed internet at home — as many as one-third of all public school students — the shift to online learning threatens to create deficits they’ll never recover from. It’s critical Congress provides funding in the next coronavirus relief bill to assist families that can’t afford internet access. But that will take time students can’t afford. The government needs to do more to get them online now.

The most efficient way to do so is through schools themselves. Over the past decade, the U.S. has made significant progress in connecting schools to the internet. Nearly every district in the country now has sufficient bandwidth for digital instruction; in 2013, less than one-third did. The number of students with access to broadband in their schools has increased more than tenfold during that span. The expansion was spurred by a federal program called E-rate, which provides public schools and libraries with discounts on broadband and wireless connections. For schools in high-poverty areas, E-rate subsidies can cover up to 90% of the cost of maintaining high-speed networks.

But the program comes with a significant limitation. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 stipulated E-rate funds could be used only for internet connections inside classrooms. Although the Federal Communications Commission has since loosened the rules, allowing schools to use them to pay for Wi-Fi networks that students can access anywhere on school property, that’s little help with schools shut and students forced to learn from home.

Democratic lawmakers have pushed the FCC to give schools the flexibility to use E-rate funds to support students who lack at-home broadband. One option is for schools to purchase Wi-Fi hotspots and distribute them to students in need. Another is for districts to negotiate with service providers to help pay the broadband bills of low-income households. Districts could also expand existing networks beyond school grounds or create public wireless hubs in underserved areas.

The advantage of this approach is districts can get started right away. Because of the plummeting cost of broadband, current E-rate spending is about \$2 billion under the program’s annual cap, so the FCC can make funds available without waiting for an additional appropriation. That money could supply broadband for as many as 2.7 million families — more than one-third of the total who currently lack access.

The chairman of the FCC, Ajit Pai, has so far opposed this approach. He argues restricting the program to school campuses is necessary to prevent funds from going toward noneducational purposes. A degree of concern about potential misuse is justified, but the cost of students being shut out of online learning is far greater. Until the pandemic subsides, the FCC should waive the current E-rate restrictions and enable schools to help at least some students access the internet from home. Congress should appropriate sufficient funding to support the rest. Failing to do so will shortchange students, widen educational inequities and betray the country's promise of equal opportunity.

– **Bloomberg op-ed**

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Lycoming County commissioners approved a \$2.5 million grant for extending broadband networking throughout the region at their meeting Tuesday. The Appalachian Regional Commission funding is part of the cooperative agreement with Tioga, Potter and Clinton counties for establishing the network. Public meetings held in the past year have considered how to best provide broadband to areas without the service.

Commissioners discussed the possible use of the county's \$10.5 million share of federal stimulus dollars to help fund the project. The coronavirus relief bill funding, if approved, would be restricted to COVID-19 related issues or problems. Commissioner Rick Mirabito noted the numbers of students living in areas without broadband who need to access educational and learning services. "We definitely have the need," he said. Mirabito and Commissioner Tony Mussare said the end-of-year deadline for using the federal money could prove to be problematic. Mussare urged the public to contact federal lawmakers about the issue. "We need broadband but it would help to have the deadline extended," Mirabito said. Their next meeting is set for 10 a.m. Tuesday at Executive Plaza, 330 Pine St., Williamsport. – **Williamsport Sun-Gazette**

