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Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler, a fan of the relentless Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, has never been known for aiming low, and he started the year with an ambitious agenda to reshape the rules on everything from cable TV to internet privacy.

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Mr. Wheeler has yet to bring up any of his major proposals for a final FCC vote, amid industry opposition and fraying support on the commission and in Congress. And as the commission meets again Thursday to debate minor matters, time could be running out on some of Mr. Wheeler's big plans. Even some fellow Democrats question whether it is feasible for Mr. Wheeler—who last year succeeded in pushing through a landmark

net-neutrality rule—to accomplish all his goals this year.

“Chairman Wheeler has accomplished a lot during his tenure, but with the election fast approaching, he probably has time to get one more big thing done,” said Rep. Frank

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Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Mr. Wheeler's plans are complicated by election-year politics, including his reluctance to commit to departing when President Barack Obama's tenure ends. These complexities could hamper his three big goals for the year.

Some observers say Mr. Wheeler's far-reaching plan to open the market for TV set-top boxes may have to be cut back. Questions surround his expansive proposal to impose tougher consumer-privacy rules on cable and phone companies that supply internet access. An effort to rewrite the rules on business telecommunications service is similarly in doubt. Mr. Wheeler's challenges were underscored on Wednesday when the U.S. Copyright Office sent a letter to lawmakers raising concerns about his set-top box plan.

Defenders insist he is still on track to achieve victories in all three areas. "Sure, there are headwinds, but that's often a sign that they're doing something right," said Todd O'Boyle, program director for the media and democracy reform initiative at Common Cause, a left-leaning public-interest group. "There's reason to think that the FCC will advance all three reforms." "Chairman Wheeler has laid out an ambitious agenda on behalf of American consumers that he intends to carry out while chairman of the FCC," a spokeswoman for Mr. Wheeler said. At a recent news conference he said: "We'll move them as they become ripe." He declined to impose deadlines and denied there were any delays.

Mr. Wheeler originally proposed in January to open up the market for TV set-top boxes—now dominated by the cable-TV companies—to outsiders such as Alphabet Inc.'s Google unit. His plan raised concerns not only among cable firms but also TV content producers, who fear it could disrupt their carefully negotiated contracts with cable companies on issues such as advertising and channel placement. The FCC now is weighing whether a narrower industry counterproposal could become the basis for compromise.

Adding to Mr. Wheeler's problems is an increasingly awkward relationship with fellow Democratic Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel. She has been seeking confirmation by the Senate to a second five-year term on the commission, where Democrats have a 3-2 advantage. Senate Republicans have held up a vote on her nomination because Mr. Wheeler hasn't committed to dropping off the panel after Mr. Obama's term ends, as they say custom dictates.

Mr. Wheeler's allies defend his decision, saying agency custom isn't so clear-cut and that his resignation could leave the agency short-handed for months. "It's the only way to play the game," said former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt, who served under President Bill Clinton. "Otherwise the new Democratic president disempowers herself...for no reason."

Ms. Rosenworcel's situation is further complicated because lawmakers in both parties have expressed concerns about Mr. Wheeler's set-top box plan as well as his privacy plan. That means she could risk losing support if she sides with Mr. Wheeler, or risk alienating some Democrats and activists if she drags out her decision. Ms. Rosenworcel has expressed concerns about Mr. Wheeler's original set-top box proposal and has raised potential issues with the privacy plan. That leaves Mr. Wheeler under unusual pressure to come up with compromises that can garner the needed three votes to pass.

There is little likelihood Mr. Wheeler can attract support from either of the panel's two Republicans. Critics say Mr. Wheeler's hard-charging style has made compromise harder. "I think in my time in Congress I've never seen a chairman that drove his own agenda as strongly as he [Mr. Wheeler] does," said Rep. Greg Walden (R., Ore.), chairman of the House Communications and Technology Subcommittee. He praised Mr. Wheeler as "very bright and very capable," but added that "there are a range of issues"

where the chairman has "created a very divided commission."

A longtime telecommunications entrepreneur and executive who was an early supporter of Mr. Obama, Mr. Wheeler has had a lifelong fascination with military strategy. He has written books on Civil War leaders and admires Gen. Grant, who was famed for his relentlessness in pursuing the enemy. – *Wall Street Journal*

Dish Network said it has come to terms on a multi-year renewal of its broadcast retransmission licensing deal with Raycom, averting an additional blackout of 56 more network affiliates. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Through its station websites, Raycom informed its Dish-subscribing viewers that its local channels would be blacked out on the satellite service if a renewal wasn't signed by 6 p.m. EST Thursday. Dish and analysts who cover the company attribute many of the 281,000 customer losses in the second quarter to the pay-TV operators steady stream of retrans and carriage battles.

Dish is still locked in a protracted impasse with Tribune Media which involves 42 stations in 33 markets. Tribune has started running commercials in affected markets like Indianapolis, letting Fox and CBS affiliate viewers know that NFL games on those channels will be blacked out on Dish come September if a new deal isn't made. Earlier this week, the satellite operator agreed to terms with the National Football League to restore cable channels the NFL Network and RedZone to its service. That carriage renewal deal included provisions to include the networks on Dish's Sling TV IP-based service. – *Fierce Cable*

Robert Rosencrans, the first board chairman of C-SPAN who helped steer the public affairs network through its opening years and worked for the organization for almost four decades, has died. He was 89. Rosencrans' wife, Marjorie, told The Associated Press on Thursday that her husband of 59 years died Wednesday at a hospital in Greenwich, Connecticut, surrounded by his family. He had recently suffered a stroke. "He was such a special man. Everybody that knew him, loved him," said Majorie Rosencrans, who described herself as "lucky" to have found him.

As the then-president of UA-Columbia Cable, Rosencrans and business partner Ken Gunter became the first cable operators to support the idea of Brian Lamb, who envisioned C-SPAN as a public affairs channel, the network said in a statement. At that time, less than 20 percent of U.S. homes were wired for cable.

Rosencrans wrote a check for \$25,000 and convinced other cable industry people to contribute to what proved to be the seed money that helped create the infrastructure to transmit the first live broadcasts of the U.S. House of Representatives on March 19, 1979, to roughly 3.5 million homes served by 350 cable systems. "He never wanted any personal credit for it, but if it hadn't been for Bob Rosencrans, there probably wouldn't be a C-SPAN," Lamb, now C-SPAN's executive chairman, said in a statement. "Bob was a tremendous human being."

In a video tribute on C-SPAN, Rosencrans described the role of the network as giving the American public access to the proceedings in the nation's capital. "Let the public understand what goes on in Washington, what the issues are and how to deal with them," he said. "And I think above all, the mission here at C-SPAN has been just that, and we're very proud of that."

He saw the exposure as a chance to educate and inform. "We believe that our nation can only benefit from more exposure to our political process; to educate and inform our people, both young and old, and give us all a better feeling that we are participating in this process that carries our nation forward," he said. Rosencrans served as C-SPAN's chairman emeritus until his death. He leaves behind his wife and four children. –

Associated Press



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