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When Gov. Tom Wolf drove along U.S. Route 6 about a year ago during a visit to Charles Cole Memorial Hospital in Coudersport, he noticed he couldn't get cell phone reception in certain areas. The governor not only saw the need for better broadband internet access for residents of Potter County, but took it a step further by providing a \$1.5 million grant to provide better internet access for the rural area.

The grant was announced by Dennis Davin, secretary of the state Department of Community and Economic Development, during a press conference and walking tour of Coudersport Tuesday. The grant was approved for Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative to construct 103 miles of above-ground fiber that will expand access to broadband for 830 residential, 540 seasonal customers and 13 commercial customers that currently lack access to adequate internet speed in Potter County. "Access to broadband opens the lines of communication in many ways," Gov. Wolf said in a written statement. "By bringing faster internet service to rural Pennsylvania, we are supporting current residents and existing industry and doing a lot to attract people and businesses to the region."

Davin agreed, noting the installation of the fiber lines will solve some of the broadband service issues in the area. "If you have the infrastructure, then you can attract people and businesses," Davin said during his walking tour to see business facades that had been funded by the state. "You have places here that have good opportunities to bring businesses into," he added. "But they have to have a workforce and a properly trained workforce — and they have to have access."

Davin said he is certain there are outdoors enthusiasts from around the state who would rather live in an area such as Coudersport, known for its pristine hunting and fishing opportunities, but can't work remotely because of lack of access. "In this area, broadband will lead to more businesses and more residents," he remarked. "It's really one of our number one issues here because it relates to everything — education, tourism and business."

Mark Moore, president of the Coudersport Area Chamber of Commerce, participated in the tour and told Davin, "We get calls everyday at the chamber about what's in the area, what's available and the job market, but there aren't a lot of places online to send them. "We just don't have the communication that bigger (communities)

**Philadelphia
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can all be official
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have.” Potter County Commissioner Susan Kefover said she believes Davin’s grant announcement is “just a wonderful encouragement for all of us working in economic development. “This is such an important step,” she stated.

On a related note, Davin said the grant should be available to reimburse participating communities within a couple of months. “We are going around the state and announcing these types of grants for important projects like this one,” Davin explained. “We started in Towanda (Monday) and are making our way here in this area. The (funds) are all unique” for various community needs.

Wolf also had noted the construction of the fiber is expected to create 27 jobs, with an additional four full-time jobs created permanently as a direct result of the project. In addition, potential customers of the fiber currently account for more than 530 jobs. It was also noted that the Potter County program is a pilot project that will eventually lead to a larger concept to extend broadband service to the entire Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative service territory. – ***Bradford Era***

Tribune Media Co. terminated its [merger agreement with rival TV station-owner](#) Sinclair Broadcast Group and sued the company, alleging it failed to make sufficient efforts to get their \$3.9 billion deal approved by regulators.

Last month Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai said [he had serious concerns about Sinclair's submissions](#) as part of the agency’s review, and sent it to an administrative law judge, a severe blow to the merger’s approval chances. The suit, filed in Delaware Chancery Court, seeks \$1 billion of lost premium to Tribune stockholders and additional damages. Tribune alleges that Sinclair breached the merger agreement by engaging in “unnecessarily aggressive and protracted negotiations” with regulators over their requirement that Sinclair divest stations in certain markets to obtain approval. The deal structures that Sinclair proposed, which Tribune said were done to allow it to maintain control over stations, created risks for the deal in violation of the merger agreement, Tribune alleges.

The collapse of the deal and lawsuit mark a stunning turn of events for a deal that when it was announced in May 2017 seemed certain to receive regulatory approval. “Our merger cannot be completed within an acceptable time frame, if ever,” Tribune Media Chief Executive Peter Kern said in a statement. “This uncertainty and delay would be detrimental to our company and our shareholders. Accordingly, we have exercised our right to terminate the merger agreement, and, by way of our lawsuit, intend to hold Sinclair accountable.” Sinclair didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

During a call to [discuss its quarterly earnings Wednesday](#), Sinclair said it was continuing to work with Tribune to “analyze approaches to the regulatory process that are in the best interest of our companies, employees and shareholders.” After the FCC’s move, Sinclair denied that it had done anything to mislead the agency and said its proposed spin offs are “consistent with structures that Sinclair and many other broadcasters have utilized for many years with the full approval of the FCC.” Tribune could now be back in play. Other companies that were

pursuing it along with Sinclair [included 21st Century Fox and Nexstar Media Group](#) Inc.

Media watchdogs had challenged the deal because of concerns that it would put too many local television stations under one roof. Sinclair owns more than 170 television stations in mostly midsize and smaller markets, while Tribune has 42 stations in major markets. The issue that caused the deal to hit a roadblock at the FCC was the structure of Sinclair's proposals to spin off TV stations. Mr. Pai, the FCC chairman, said evidence suggested that Sinclair's spinoff proposals would still leave it in practical control of those stations "in violation of the law."

In one proposal, Sinclair said it would sell Tribune's WGN-TV Chicago to Steven Fader for \$60 million. That price was seen as far below the station's market value, and Sinclair Chairman David Smith sits on the board of a car-dealership concern where Mr. Fader serves as chief executive. Sinclair was given several opportunities to resubmit its spinoff plans but none passed the bar with regulators. Mr. Pai expressed concern about a possible lack of candor on Sinclair's part with regard to the proposed transactions.

When a merger goes before an administrative law judge, that is typically a death knell for the deal. In the lawsuit, Tribune alleges that Sinclair violated its sales agreement because of its constant efforts to try to hold on to control of TV stations that regulators wanted divested in return for approval. The Sinclair-Tribune deal also triggered [an investigation by the Justice Department](#) into whether station owners violated antitrust law by sharing ad sales information that potentially could lead to higher advertising rates.

Another casualty of the Sinclair-Tribune deal collapse is [21st Century Fox's deal to acquire seven of the Tribune stations](#) from Sinclair for \$910 million. Tribune said it had notified Fox it has terminated that agreement. Tribune said no fees are payable by any party. 21st Century Fox and Wall Street Journal parent News Corp. share common ownership. – *Wall Street Journal*

National Democrats are touting big money they are spending to woo voters, especially minorities, in Pennsylvania. The Democratic National Committee [released a memo](#) Wednesday detailing how it has sent \$595,000 to the Pennsylvania Democratic Party. A lot of the money is aimed at reaching Hispanic and African-American voters.

Will that financial effort pay off by getting more of the Lehigh Valley's growing number of Hispanic voters to the polls? For years, the Valley's Democratic and Republican parties have considered the area's Hispanic population a political "sleeping giant" that can change election outcomes. Allentown's total population is 49 percent Hispanic, Bethlehem's is 30 percent, Lehigh County's is 25 percent and Northampton County's is 13 percent, according to 2016 [U.S. Census data](#).

Hispanic voters can turn the results to favor candidates in small, regional elections as evidenced by the way Ed Pawlowski won re-election in 2017 to become Allentown mayor. He later resigned after being found guilty at a federal corruption trial. But it's been harder for politicians to get large numbers of Hispanic voters to the polls in less

high profile local elections and elections with statewide and national implications.

In the 2016 presidential election, Lehigh Valley neighborhoods with large Hispanic enclaves saw the same lower turnout rates they produce every election cycle. For example, at least 66 percent of Lehigh County voters went to the polls in 2016, but that figure dropped to 53 percent in Allentown, where nearly half the population is Hispanic. Since 2016, Allentown's Hispanic population has grown to about 53 percent of 120,440 total residents. Out of Allentown's total population, 79,665 are voting-age adults, of which 44 percent are Hispanic. Will they be a ballot force in 2018?

DNC is spending big time to try to find out. Part of the DNC's strategy is to try to reach out to Puerto Rican voters displaced from their homes by Hurricane Maria. Across the United States, Republicans have a different national get-out-the-vote strategy of trying to tap into GOP voters' anxiety over immigration, Democratic congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and radical left, according to the Associated Press. – *Allentown Morning Call*

