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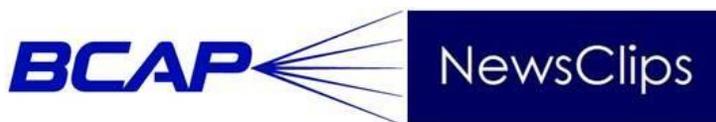
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August 22, 2019

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Senator Bob Casey came to Coudersport to talk with local leaders about improving access to broadband/high speed internet in Potter County on Monday. Will Hunt, GIS/planning director for the county, gave a presentation on the broadband project with Tri-County Rural Electric.

Tri-Co Connections, Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative's high-speed internet subsidiary, will make broadband internet service available to more than 16,500 cooperative members in a seven county region (Potter, Tioga, Bradford, Lycoming, Clinton, McKean and

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Cameron counties) over the next six years. Tri-Co Connections received \$77 million to develop a broadband initiative. The build out will begin in Potter County where the first 100 miles will begin in Austin and move north, to the Sharon and Shinglehouse area.

There is a high need for access to high speed internet. Hunt said through a survey done for the county's comprehensive plan, county residents identified broadband second to roads as a need. Hunt said they plan to conduct a survey to pinpoint where the needs are currently. The survey will ask for things such as their location, provider — if there is one — and their download and upload speeds.

Teresa Dennis, state director for Casey, asked about how to get services to low-income families. Hunt said the survey won't include questions about income but suggested they could work with human services and local school districts to identify those areas and needs. Michele Moore, executive director of Potter County Education Council, said she has been working with Bill Gerksi, senior vice president of business development at Tri-Co Connections, to find a way to make sure the county's seniors aren't excluded from the digital era.

Their solution is a program called seniors2seniors. It is an eight-week tech course held at each of the senior centers throughout Potter County. The hour long class will be held once a week and will teach basic technology literacy skills, computer skills, cyber security and others. Laptops and iPads will be provided, or they could bring in their own devices. Moore hopes to have it kick off in October. The Education Council will also reach out to local high school students to volunteer their time to come to the classes and act as class aides.

Helping senior citizens learn how to use this technology will improve their quality of life. Jim Kockler, administrator of human services, said not only will the senior citizens be able to communicate with their loved ones who live far away via Skype or FaceTime, but they'll also be able to use telemedicine, order their prescriptions or pay their bills online.

Casey told the Potter Leader-Enterprise it was helpful for him to have direct insight into how one county with substantial broadband needs is working to bridge that divide. "I think what folks here in Potter County are doing is the kind of effort we hope would be replicated across the state," Casey said. He said in terms of what the federal government is doing, there's a long way to go to improve access to broadband, but it's good to hear what is happening locally in terms of what it takes to get the kind of connectivity needed. — **Potter Co. Leader-Enterprise**

Americans are divided over government regulation of big tech firms, according to a [Gallup poll released Wednesday](#), as concerns grow over users' privacy and whether tech giants have formed monopolies.

Forty-eight percent of survey respondents said the government should boost its regulation of technology companies like Amazon, Facebook and Google, while 40 percent said regulation of these firms shouldn't change. Ten percent said the companies should face less oversight. Hispanics and non-college graduates were the only two groups mostly in favor of not changing regulations, while roughly 60

percent each of self-identified liberals, union members, college graduates and Democrats support increased oversight.

Adults under the age of 30 were evenly split over whether to increase regulations or keep them the same, with 44 percent voicing support for each position. Fears over users' privacy on major platforms have been fueled by headlines about information being collected either by third parties or the platforms themselves for advertising purposes.

The issue was in the spotlight two years ago after it was revealed that Cambridge Analytica harvested data from millions of Facebook profiles and used it for political advertising purposes. Lawmakers have also voiced concerns over some tech giants' market power, with the House Judiciary Committee's antitrust subcommittee opening a probe into major Silicon Valley players. "By virtue of controlling essential infrastructure, these companies appear to have the ability to control access to markets," House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) said last month.

Despite concerns over tech companies' power, a plurality of Americans have positive views of tech companies, with 46 percent saying they had "very" or "somewhat" positive opinions of firms like Amazon, Facebook and Google, while 33 percent said they had "very" or "somewhat" negative feelings. Twenty-two percent said they were neutral. The Gallup poll surveyed 1,522 adults from Aug. 1-14 and has a margin of error of 3 percentage points. – ***The Hill***

