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August 23, 2016

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Two internet companies that were not paid by the state of Idaho after a judge voided their contract to bring broadband to public schools are suing for the money they say they are owed — more than \$37 million in back payments and damages.

Education Networks of America Inc. and CenturyLink Communications LLC filed the lawsuits in federal court last Friday, about 10 days after Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden sent the companies a letter demanding the return of the millions the state had already paid. The companies contend the contract was void because of the state's actions and through no fault of their own, and say they are demanding payment for the work they did. The companies also want to be compensated for the money they invested to comply with future terms of the contract, such as extending fiber optic cable to remote areas.

In the CenturyLink lawsuit, company officials contend state leaders — including Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and legislative leaders — acknowledged multiple times that the state must pay for the network services it received. Wasden's spokeswoman Kris Bivens-Cloyd declined comment Monday on the lawsuits, saying state officials are reviewing them.

If the companies win, Idaho could face an even bigger price tag for the failed statewide broadband plan. Taxpayers have already paid out more than \$29 million for the project. Lawmakers had previously hoped to settle the claims for \$8 million. But those efforts were scuttled when the Idaho Supreme Court agreed that the contract with the companies was void. The \$60 million broadband program was created in 2008 in hopes of bringing a single high-speed internet system to all schools across the state.

Proponents said it would give rural students the access to high-speed internet, classes and resources available then available only at bigger schools in more populated and better connected areas. But the program soon became immersed in a legal quagmire of claims and counterclaims by contractors and state officials. By 2015, most schools were scrambling to find their own internet providers.

Taxpayers could get hit with another school internet bill if the Federal Communications Commission decides to seek repayment for millions of dollars in federal funds that were used for the project, though Otter's spokesman Jon Hanian said so far no such request has been made. The broadband contract was declared void after a judge ruled that Idaho

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Meanwhile, Idaho state law requires state leaders to try to recover any money paid out under an illegal contract. Because the contract was declared void — even though both companies performed the work they were contracted to do — the Idaho Supreme Court said Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden or other officials were required to recover millions of dollars from the companies. — **Associated Press**

Republicans have been trying to strengthen their ties to Silicon Valley, in part to boost support from its wealthy executives. Donald Trump, the party's presidential nominee, hasn't followed suit. While other GOP presidential candidates earlier this election cycle held policy meetings and fundraisers in the region, Mr. Trump has done little to form relationships here. Though the executives largely lean Democratic, they include libertarians and others open to

the party's antiregulatory message.

Now, many of the industry's Republicans say they are devoting their efforts and money to congressional races or, in some cases, to boosting Democrat Hillary Clinton. Peter Thiel, the billionaire co-founder of PayPal, has become the most prominent Silicon Valley figure to support Mr. Trump. He spoke at the Republican convention last month in prime time, just before Mr. Trump formally accepted his party's nomination. Yet Mr. Thiel, who donated \$2 million to a super PAC backing one of Mr. Trump's former presidential primary rivals, ex-Hewlett-Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina, has no plans to donate to or raise money for Mr. Trump, a spokesman said.

The frosty relations mean Mr. Trump's fundraising operation potentially is leaving millions of dollars on the table, adding to his already-substantial shortfall with Mrs. Clinton. She ended July with \$140 million in her campaign, joint funds with the Democratic Party and a friendly super PAC; Mr. Trump's comparable take was \$78 million.

Larry Ellison, the billionaire co-founder of Oracle Corp., spent \$5 million backing Sen. Marco Rubio in his GOP presidential run and in 2012 gave \$3 million to a super PAC supporting Republican nominee Mitt Romney. But he has yet to open his wallet for Mr. Trump, according to Federal Election Commission filings. A spokesman for Mr. Ellison

didn't return a request for comment.

Mr. Trump's challenges are reflected in FEC filings and interviews with more than a dozen prominent Republican donors in Silicon Valley. Tech executives say their dissatisfaction with Mr. Trump goes beyond his lack of outreach. His calls for tougher limits on trade and immigration conflict with the industry's interests, they say, and his controversial comments about various ethnic and racial groups are culturally out of step with Silicon Valley. Moreover, Mr. Trump rarely talks about high tech's role in the economy, focusing instead on efforts to aid small business, manufacturing and the coal industry. Mr. Trump's campaign declined a request for comment.

Silicon Valley donors say the Trump campaign hasn't reached out to discuss policy or fundraising. He hasn't released a tech policy platform, as Mrs. Clinton did in June. His campaign opened an office near the region just a few weeks before the California primary in June. Mr. Trump has also attacked several top tech companies or their CEOs on the campaign trail. He fired shots at Apple Inc., for example, for what he called its noncooperation with a Justice Department terrorism investigation. "For Silicon Valley Republicans, this is just an extremely unattractive candidate," said Alex Slusky, founder of venture-capital firm Vector Capital, who donated \$100,000 to a super PAC backing Mr. Rubio in February. Mr. Slusky said that in conversations with fellow Republicans in the industry, he refers to the 2016 campaign as "the worst election in our adult lifetimes."

In the current election cycle through June, GOP presidential candidates, including those who exited the race, and allied super PACs collectively raised nearly \$18 million from the communications and electronics sector, which includes the tech industry, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. Mr. Trump's share: \$336,000. Mrs. Clinton's haul from the industry in the same period: \$30 million. Some tech executives have been vocal critics of Mr. Trump. Nearly 150 [published an open letter](#) calling the nominee a "disaster for innovation." Several tech companies reduced or eliminated donations to the Republican convention. Hewlett Packard Enterprise Co. Chief Executive Meg Whitman, a billionaire Republican, earlier this month [said she planned to back Mrs. Clinton](#) and donate to her campaign, calling Mr. Trump "unfit" for the presidency.

Planned fundraisers for Mr. Trump have also taken a hit. At least two co-hosts of an event in Seattle later this month—including Mr. Trump's Oregon state finance chairman—said they didn't plan to attend the gathering, citing the nominee's policy positions and his attacks on the parents of an American Muslim soldier killed in Iraq. In June, Intel CEO Brian Krzanich planned an event for Mr. Trump at his Atherton, Calif., home, [but canceled](#) it after the plans were reported by the New York Times. Mr. Krzanich, at an event last month, said the gathering was planned not as a fundraiser but as an opportunity to discuss issues important to the tech industry.

The media scrutiny of Mr. Krzanich's event "sent a chill down a number of spines" of other tech Republicans who may have considered a similar event, said Trevor Traina, founder of e-commerce company IfOnly. Mr. Traina, who gave \$50,000 to a pro-Bush super PAC last year, said the response was akin to a "witch hunt." Mr. Trump has raised substantial funds online, [bringing in \\$64 million in July alone](#) for his campaign and a joint Republican Party fund via digital and email efforts. But he has struggled to make inroads in big fundraising centers.

Many top Wall Street donors, including hedge-fund billionaire Paul Singer, haven't rallied behind the GOP nominee, and the industry was rankled by the Republican platform's embrace of a law that would force the breakup of large financial institutions. Lawyers and lobbyists, a top source of Mr. Romney's 2012 contributions, also have kept their distance.

Not a single registered lobbyist had raised funds for Mr. Trump through June, according to FEC disclosures. "You cannot speak so much against immigration that you turn the best and the brightest from coming to the U.S., because that will hurt us," said Robert Nelsen, a venture capitalist who gave \$2,500 to a super PAC backing Mr. Rubio. A Romney

supporter in 2012, Mr. Nelsen said he has been in touch with advisers to Mrs. Clinton about drug innovation policy. He is now leaning toward backing her. – **Wall Street Journal**

As Hillary Clinton and Katie McGinty, both looking to make political history this November, make their case to Pennsylvania, they might want to refer to a new study showing just how badly women are doing in the Keystone State. We know Pennsylvania never elected a woman senator or governor and has the lowest percentage of women in the Legislature among northeastern states. But now comes research from WalletHub, a D.C.-based financial website, showing Pennsylvania is 47th among the states in overall women's equity.

You can read the full findings [right here](#).

Results were released Tuesday in advance of Women's Equity Day (August 26), which annually marks certification of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote. Results reflect more than a dozen measurements in categories including the workplace, leadership positions, unemployment rates, income, education and political empowerment.

The analysis found Pennsylvania way down the list in gender disparity among minimum-wage workers, entrepreneurship, educational attainment and political representation. And WalletHub stresses that gender inequality in all states is most evident in the workplace -- a category in which Pennsylvania ranks 46th. It cites findings of the Center for American Progress, an independent, non-partisan progressive research and advocacy group, that women hold just 25 percent of workplace executive or senior-level positions, just 19 percent of board seats and are only 4.6 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.

Women meanwhile make up the majority of the workforce in many areas, including financial services and health care; make up a majority of the population nationally and in the state, and tend to vote in higher proportions than men. But in the state where the Constitution was written, women's equity in 2016 ranks near the bottom of all states. Only three states rank lower than Pennsylvania: New Jersey, Georgia, and Utah. States ranked highest (from first to fifth) are Hawaii, Alaska, Maine, California, and Vermont. – pennlive.com



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