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Atlantic Broadband said it has launched the MLB.TV app on its leased TiVo-powered platform, enabling subs to access the subscription-based app directly from the on-screen interface. The integration allows Atlantic Broadband customers with MLB.TV Premium subscriptions to access and stream out-of-market Major League Baseball games to the TV.

Ahead of the 2017 MLB playoffs, Atlantic Broadband also plans to launch the MLB Network on September 28 across its service area. Atlantic Broadband, a subsidiary of Canada-based Cogeco Communications, serves about 246,000 video subs in western Pennsylvania; Miami Beach; parts of Maryland/Delaware; Aiken, S.C.; and eastern Connecticut.

"The launch of the MLB.TV app is another exciting step forward as part of our initiative to bring customers access to the most popular and valuable internet video services, combined with the channels they love to watch every day through our award-winning TiVo platform," Heather McCallion, Atlantic Broadband's VP of video services, said in a statement. "We're also excited to give baseball fans across our footprint access to MLB Network this fall so they can indulge in their passion for the game as we get into the most exciting part of the baseball season." -- *Multichannel*

Today's progressive movement puts a premium on data-driven analysis and commitment to science and facts. It stems from the early days of the Bush administration when Democrats mocked Karl Rove's promise to "create our own reality" and instead demanded "reality-based" policies to solve problems, not wish them away. And it's powerful politics — aligning progressives with the 97 percent of scientists who believe human activity causes global warming or the RAND Institute experts who found transgendered military service has "little or no impact on unit cohesion, operational effectiveness or readiness."

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But there's a catch. To be credible, progressives must also listen when the facts challenge their partisan pre-conceptions. When political opponents propose reality-based policies of their own, progressives must give the data its due.



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Right now, for example, the Federal Communications Commission is reviewing the Obama-era net neutrality rules that put in place a 1930s-era utility regulation framework for the internet. When these Title II rules were passed under former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, most experts warned they would discourage investment in broadband, eliminating construction and engineering jobs and making it harder to deploy new networks and close the digital divide. And now two years later, the data are in — and it makes clear that the skeptics were right. Title II is an investment killer that undermines key progressive values and priorities.

Overall, multiple economic studies have found the utility approach to regulation is a threat to network investment. One recent study found that capital investment at the 12 largest broadband companies has declined by \$3.6 billion since 2014, a 5.6 percent shortfall. Another concluded the looming threat of heightened internet regulation has driven total

network investment down by at least \$150 billion since 2011. Overall, a comprehensive survey of these reports concluded that as many as 700,000 jobs may have been lost so far — a lost generation of network jobs we will never fully be able to restore.

These data are backed up by expert reports from industries covered directly or indirectly by the Wheeler regulations. Small equipment and hardware manufacturers warn the Title II approach “will have a negative impact on the economic well-being of the numerous small and medium size companies that make hardware and software used to provide Internet services.”

Rural wireless companies have explained it “inhibits our ability to build and operate networks in rural America.” And nonprofit government broadband services have complained they must “often delay or hold off from rolling out a new feature or service” because of risks and uncertainty created by in Title II. In response, supporters of Title II have released studies and fact sheets purporting to show the opposite — that investment has been steady even after the rules were put in place. But being “reality based” means subjecting all arguments to reasonable scrutiny, and this one just does not hold up.

In part, the data are simply skewed. For example, the Title II advocates use data that includes billions in dollars invested in foreign countries and markets like video that aren't even covered by Title II. And that depends heavily on predicted or "forecast" filler data that even the study author calls "flawed." Even more troubling, this approach is looking at the wrong question from an economist's point of view — asking only if total investment in broadband has gone up or down since the rules (a question it answers incorrectly due to the errors cited above), not whether investment would be even higher or lower if Title II were not in place. Some investment obviously continued, but the data show much more would have occurred under smarter rules.

For progressives, it is vital to continue to build support for data-driven policymaking and fair-minded analysis of issues and evidence. It's the only real defense against the demagogues and spinmeisters and outright liars that we have. In this case, that means acknowledging that the Wheeler Title II rules are the wrong way to protect net neutrality because the cost in investment, jobs and deployment of the internet to connect all Americans is just too great.

Net neutrality remains critical, of course. Progressives will always stand for a free and open internet, where no website can be blocked for ideological reasons, and no one is discriminated against or abused online. Free expression everywhere — including on the internet — is fundamental and must be protected. But the right way to do this is by pushing Congress to pass a law protecting net neutrality and making it permanent without the risks and harms of Title II. Such a law would ensure that net neutrality cannot be changed when administrations come and go. And that no one — not even a president — can override it, no matter what.

There is broad and bipartisan support for net neutrality in Congress. Leaders of both parties have already proposed moving forward with such a bill. Progressives should support them — and push for a tough, smart and, above all, reality-based net neutrality to be passed. — **Orlando Sentinel op-ed**

Verizon Communications Inc. said it would start limiting video quality for all customers across its network, months after the **No. 1 U.S. carrier** by subscribers launched unlimited data plans. The video throttling technique, which is also employed by rival carriers, came alongside new data plans that effectively raise the price of Verizon's current **unlimited data offer**. The company said it would limit video qualities for both users of its unlimited plans as well as customers with monthly amounts of data.

Verizon said starting Wednesday it will sell an unlimited data plan that doesn't stream videos in high definition, starting at \$75 a month for one line, alongside an unlimited plan with HD quality video, starting at \$85 a month for one line. (Both prices include discounts for enrolling in automatic payments and paperless billing.)

The tiered unlimited plans illustrate how wireless carriers have struggled to make money off increased data usage. For years, carriers primarily sold capped plans that charged per gigabyte of usage. But consumers, struggling to understand what constitutes a "gigabyte," flocked to unlimited data offers. When Verizon brought back an unlimited data option in February, the company offered unlimited data, including HD quality video, for \$80 a month for one device. Both T-Mobile US Inc. and Sprint Corp. had been targeting Verizon's customer base with unlimited offerings, but both only allowed for lower quality video streaming.

For Verizon customers on unlimited data plans without the HD video option, which costs \$75, the content will be streamed at 480p DVD resolution on phones and 720p on tablets. The company said it would limit video quality for all existing customers as well as those with the HD video unlimited plans to 720p for phones and 1080p for tablets. "We're doing this to ensure all customers have a great experience on our network since there is no significant difference in quality on a smartphone or tablet when video is shown at higher resolution," the company said on its website.

While the reduced quality will significantly reduce the load on Verizon's network, it is unlikely most customers will notice the lower video quality. Typical smartphone screens aren't large enough to show a major difference. Video throttling won't occur on Wi-Fi connections. Verizon says its network is performing well. Rather than spend billions to **acquire rights to additional airwaves**, in recent years it has installed more cellular antennas closer to the ground with a smaller footprint, so that fewer customers connect to each one, lowering congestion.

Most unlimited plans come with a soft-cap that reduce speeds on congested cell sites after using about 22 gigabytes or more data during a billing cycle. But customers with the lower-cost unlimited Verizon plan will be "de-prioritized" at all times, meaning customers could face reduced speeds at any time. Verizon says those reductions vary widely but shouldn't be noticeable. Walt Piecyk, an analyst

at BTIG research, said the latest changes raised questions about Verizon's network. "Is Verizon's price increase a sign of dwindling network capacity or a path to revenue growth?" he wrote in a research report.

T-Mobile has also raised prices slightly recently. Taken together, the moves might signal the wireless industry **isn't as competitive** as people think, Mr. Piecyk said. Recent analysis from independent network companies have offered mixed results on Verizon's network. A report from **OpenSignal** found Verizon's network speeds have slowed slightly following the launch of unlimited. Another firm, RootMetrics, still rated Verizon's network the fastest and most reliable. – *Wall Street Journal*

With an ongoing budget impasse and no problem-solving happening in Harrisburg, state pols are starting to, well, play with their food. Picture antsy toddlers refusing to eat their vegetables.

The state is running out of money. The state treasurer is threatening to withhold bailout loans. The legislature is not in session (not always a bad thing). The governor has vanished. So it must be political playtime. For example, the Republican-controlled House State Government Committee scheduled a hearing for Wednesday on "recent reports regarding potentially excessive expenses for groceries" at the lieutenant governor's mansion.

Now we're talkin'! Forget that \$32 billion hole in state finances. Let's get to the bottom of that grocery bag. And, look, nobody enjoys seeing and sharing details of elected officials' abusing tax dollars more than yours truly. But timing here seems suspect. "Recent reports" were in early May, when the Caucus, a weekly newspaper part of Lancaster's LPN Media Group, broke a story about Democratic Lt. Gov. Mike Stack's billing taxpayers for \$34,000 worth of groceries, some with no receipts.

This was over a two-year period and, says Stack's office, included spending for events at the LG's residence, was audited by the Office of the Budget and not found to be inappropriate, and was equal or lower to food costs for previous LGs. Ah, but among the foods? Jumbo shrimp, lobster, lump crab meat, New York strip steaks, shiitake mushrooms, and "vast amounts" of snacks and protein bars.

This is, you should pardon the expression, red meat for most taxpayers and anyone concerned with excessive, or even "potentially" excessive, expenses. Rightly so, especially because we're talking about a guy who got into office with a governor who didn't pick him and doesn't like him, and a guy who knocks back \$162,373 per year, lives in a \$2.5 million stone mansion (with pool) and serves in an office budgeted at \$1 million-plus-a-year in a job many think shouldn't exist.

Plus, this is Stack of the "**Stack moment**," slapped hard by Gov. Wolf, who took away his ride, security and domestics after fielding complaints that Stack and bride verbally abused staff and state police. There was even an investigation launched by the Office of Inspector General that either fell through the cracks or is being withheld because Stack's wife, Tonya, **sought treatment** for what is described as a mental-health issue.

So it's maybe understandable, given the year Stack is having, that the LG declined to take part in Wednesday's hearing, suggesting that committee Chairman Daryl Metcalfe, (R., Butler) go pound salt. Stack didn't actually say that. But he wrote Metcalfe a nasty letter tying Metcalfe to white supremacists (in 2015, Metcalfe invited a **white nationalist** to testify at a hearing on making English the state's official language) and tagging Metcalfe for not moving legislation in his committee to extend anti-discrimination protection to the LGBT community, and to address gerrymandering. Whew. Talk about tossing a mixed salad.

Metcalfe responded in kind with a statement referring to Stack's "libelous" assertion about white supremacist ties, "leftists" exploiting violence in Charlottesville, and the Wolf-ordered investigation of Stack, and ending with a long list of Philly Democratic "CONVICTS," adding "no would should be surprised that... [Philly Democrat Stack] would also lie and have no integrity." Better make that a chopped salad. With nuts.

Other invitees to Metcalfe's hearing – the governor's budget office and the Department of General Services, both of which handle LG spending – opted out. As did the committee's Democratic chairman, Rep. Matt Bradford (D., Montgomery), who told me, "This doesn't seem to fit the description of legitimate oversight." But a representative of the Koch brothers' Americans for Prosperity is scheduled, so maybe there'll be tough talk about government spending.

In which case, perhaps the 27-member committee (however many show up) can discuss how last year, **lawmakers spent** \$2.4 million on food and lodging, no receipts required. Or the size and cost of the legislature. Or their annual automatic pay raises. Or pensions. Or whether they're taking no-receipts-required per diems to attend a hearing on "potentially excessive expenses." Just sayin'. – *Philadelphia Daily News*; [more from pennlive.com](http://morefrompennlive.com)



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