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September 8, 2017

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Editorial: Time to budge – Zero

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai argued Thursday that less regulation and more tax breaks will help bring high-speed internet to rural areas and speed up investment in fifth generation wireless technology.

Pai also stood by his contentious proposal to roll back rules around net neutrality. Pai spoke at an event hosted by the Institute for Policy Innovation, an Irving think tank that advocates less government regulation and public policy driven by the free market. It drew an audience of tech executives, students and even AT&T's chief executive Randall Stephenson.

The former Verizon attorney was appointed by President Donald Trump to lead the five-person FCC, a government agency that regulates radio, TV, wire, cable and satellite communications. Under Pai, the FCC has taken a sharp turn with its approach to regulation. Pai has **pushed for the reversal of Obama-era FCC rules** that reclassified the internet as a utility and added protections for net neutrality, the principle that internet providers, such as Comcast, Verizon and Dallas-

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Philadelphia Inquirer
Rep. Charlie Dent, Trump critic and leading voice of centrist GOP, to retire

Allentown Morning Call
Pennsylvania state Rep. Ryan Mackenzie runs to replace Congressman Charlie Dent

based AT&T, must treat all content equally. Under the rules, for example, internet service providers could not not speed up access to preferred websites or slow down those to competitors.

The move has caused Pai to get more attention than the typical regulator. **HBO comedian John Oliver skewered Pai** on one of his shows and urged viewers to submit comments to the FCC — which ultimately **caused the government agency's website to crash**. Pai was even targeted by Bette Midler **in a critical tweet.** Dozens of big-name companies and Silicon Valley giants, including Amazon, Google and Twitter, **protested with a "day of action" in July.**

Opponents say the rollback could cause internet service providers to block or slow content on certain sites or put up virtual tollbooths for companies like Netflix that rely on the internet for delivery. And they say internet service providers like AT&T have more reason to give preferential treatment as they become both content distributors and owners. Comcast owns NBC. Verizon owns AOL and Yahoo. AT&T is on track to buy Time Warner, which includes HBO, CNN and Warner Bros.

The FCC has received more than 22 million public comments about the proposed rollback of net neutrality rules. The overwhelming majority opposed the changes. He said he favors a "free and open internet," but believes the FCC should return to the light touch regulations of the 1990s. Under Pai, the FCC has also made two other moves that AT&T favors. It **dropped the investigation into zero-rating,** the term for waiving data charges for customers when they use certain apps or websites. AT&T uses the practice as a perk for wireless customers who use AT&T's DirecTV streaming apps. The FCC also declined to review the pending merger of AT&T and Time Warner. The FCC was not required to review the merger, since no wireless licenses will be transferred.

Net neutrality was a popular topic for Thursday's audience, too. Audience members submitted a stack of related questions for the FCC chairman. In his remarks, Pai said less regulation will also help expedite the deployment of 5G. To bring about 5G, companies will be building out a network of numerous small cells, similar in size to a pizza box. He said that will trigger the need for government approvals. He said the FCC is drafting a deployment-friendly code that could be adopted by local officials to minimize red tape and delays.

During his time as chairman, Pai said he's traveled the country and visited small towns, rural areas and Native American reservations without the broadband that connects them to educational tools, job listings and telemedicine. He said he'd like to help close the digital divide by limiting regulation and offering tax breaks to network operators who bring high-speed internet to designated "gigabit opportunity zones." "The most powerful tool, in my view at least, is to establish rules that incentive and maximize private investment in high-speed networks," he said.

He said companies don't have to invest billions in improving broadband networks. "Too often, unnecessary rules make it more expensive to construct these networks than it needs to be," he said. During his remarks, Pai also spoke about his visit earlier in the week to Houston and coastal areas with damage from Hurricane Harvey. He took an aerial tour over the flooded region, visited a 911 dispatch center and saw rows of families who are staying in cots in Houston's convention center shelter. – ***Dallas Morning News***

Facebook Inc. is loosening its purse strings in its drive to become a major hub for video. The social-media giant is willing to spend as much as $1 billion to cultivate original shows for its platform, according to people familiar with matter. The figure, which could fluctuate based on the success of Facebook's programming, covers potential spending through 2018, one of the people said. The investment would far outpace Facebook's previous outlays on video content, including its live-video deals last year. It also signals Facebook's readiness to spend more than before to become what Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg calls a "video-first" platform.

Facebook's thirst for video content pits it against traditional broadcasters such as Time Warner Inc.'s HBO and deep-pocketed tech companies such as Amazon.com Inc. and Netflix Inc., which all are banking on video to capture the fleeting attention of users and seize billions of dollars in advertising that is expected to migrate from television to digital video. Apple Inc. is preparing its own **billion-dollar war chest** for content. "Our read-through is that Facebook is likely willing to spend billions of dollars to buy rights for content that might otherwise appear on TV," Pivotal Research analyst Brian Wieser wrote in a recent note. Facebook declined to comment on its spending strategy for video.

The moves come as Facebook seeks new avenues of revenue growth to offset an expected slowdown in its core business. They also reflect Mr. Zuckerberg's evolving views on paying for content, something he previously resisted, according to people familiar with the matter. Mr.

Zuckerberg has said Facebook is willing to pay for some content now, but ultimately expects creators will be financed through an ad revenue-sharing model.

Facebook is trying to set itself apart from a crowded market with programming that its two billion monthly users will want to discuss—preferably on the social network. It also is interested in deepening engagement around sports, which already spark conversation on Facebook. The company recently bid more than $600 million for the digital rights to stream cricket matches in India from 2018 to 2022, **according to a tweet** by the Indian Premier League. Facebook ultimately lost its bid to 21st Century Fox Inc.'s Star India, which bid $2.6 billion for broadcast and digital-streaming rights. 21st Century Fox and Wall Street Journal parent News Corp share common ownership.

In an interview, Pivotal's Mr. Wieser said Facebook's cricket bid was eye-popping given the relatively small size of Indian digital ad market. He likened the bid to spending $24 billion in the U.S., where the online advertising market is 40 times as large as in India. Facebook is also looking to clinch deals that make it easier for users to consume and share video on the platform, including talking with record labels to secure rights to music playing in the background of videos users upload, people familiar with the discussions said. Facebook is prepared to pay hundreds of millions of dollars for the rights, one of the people said.

Facebook has been negotiating music rights for years, but discussions intensified last year, people familiar with the matter say. One of the people said Facebook hopes to wrap up negotiations this year. Bloomberg earlier reported Facebook's **discussions to secure** music rights. In early 2016, Mr. Zuckerberg approved a budget of more than $100 million to **pay publishers to use** its live-video product. This year, Facebook's head of video said **one in five videos** posted on the site were live broadcasts.

In July 2016, Mr. Zuckerberg said Facebook's goal **was to become** a video-first service. A few months later, Mr. Zuckerberg asked video executives to study how Facebook would fare if it spent Netflix-level money on original programming, according to a person briefed on the matter. The request was more of a thought exercise, the person said, and executives concluded the strategy wouldn't play to Facebook's strengths. Still, the message was clear: Mr. Zuckerberg was willing to spend much more on content than before, the person said. – ***Wall Street Journal***