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Washington Post

Why Google and Verizon are suddenly allies on this California privacy bill

In the middle of one of the busiest legislative workdays in the Capitol this week, a group of state senators — including the chamber’s ranking Republican and Democrat — wrote Gov. Wolf letters with a not-so-subtle message: Pick Pittsburgh. Allegheny County’s top executive has already reached out to the governor, too.

As Philadelphia sizes up a coast-to-coast list of cities competing to land Amazon’s new headquarters, one of its fiercest rivals might be the in-state neighbor a few hundred miles to the west. The cities tangle over everything from who has the best sports teams to the relative merits of their respective gut-blasting sandwiches, and seem destined to collide over one of the nation’s biggest economic development prizes in years.

Variety
Verizon No Longer Evaluating Cable Company Acquisition

And if Amazon decides only one Pennsylvania town makes its short, short list, Pittsburgh is not going down without a fight. “Western Pennsylvania offers many ‘quality-of-life’ enticements that would be attractive to corporate leaders and staff, a fact that regularly places the region on the top of ‘best places to live’ lists,” one letter to Wolf declared, signed by 12 senators including Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R., Jefferson). Scarnati, whose hometown is not terribly close to Pittsburgh, only happens to be the third ranking state official in Pennsylvania.

New York Post
CBS' Moonves denies cable TV cord cutters are a problem

Politics will not technically be a factor in the two cities’ expected bids for Amazon’s second headquarters, which dangles the promise of 50,000 high-paying jobs and billions in investments. But it is part of the equation in Harrisburg, as both cities — and possibly other areas in the state — vie for Wolf’s blessing as they attempt to land the coveted prize.

For his part, Wolf, a Democrat, is trying to be Switzerland. “I’m the governor of Pennsylvania,” Wolf said in an interview Wednesday with the Inquirer and Post-Gazette. “We certainly don’t want to get into trying to play favorites within the Pennsylvania family.” Wolf said his priority is to lure the corporate giant to the state, which he said is home to “two world-class cities.” He said he read about Amazon’s search for a new city late last week, and by Saturday was already schmoozing a top Amazon executive at the Pitt-Penn State football game in State College. He also sent a handwritten note to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.

Zap2it
Cable Top 25 for Week Ending September 10

Wolf and his secretary of Community and Economic Development, Dennis Davin, said the state is willing to help both cities — and any others who decide to compete — by offering them the same help. Though the state is staying mum on specifics, that help can range from public dollars for workforce development, infrastructure improvements, and tax incentives. State assistance isn’t unprecedented. The state, under former Gov. Tom Corbett, offered \$1.6 billion in tax incentives to Shell to build its \$6 billion cracker plant in Beaver County.

Bradford Era
House working on

Corbett, a Republican, also committed up to \$30 million in grants and \$4.5 million in job creation tax credits to support Comcast’s \$1.2 billion tower in Philadelphia. Wolf, who is up for reelection next year,

[funding state budget](#)

[Easton Express-Times Pa. budget debacle: How we got here and what's next](#)

[Carlisle Sentinel Withdrawal from 911, other funds axed from Pa. House revenue plan](#)

[Associated Press Tied down with late budget, lawmakers warned to keep on ties](#)

would say only that helping the state land Amazon is a priority. It's also a priority for Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald.



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In an interview earlier this week, Fitzgerald said he had already reached out to Wolf and Davin and has begun coordinating with Pittsburgh officials, local universities and foundations, and others. "We've been moving already," he said, adding: "It's what we do well. It's one of the things Pittsburgh's really good at — working together, being cooperative."

He pitched the city as a nerve center for technological innovation that would attract millennials. He noted the city is home to Carnegie Mellon University, which also happens to be the alma mater of Brian Olsavsky, Amazon's CFO, who got his MBA there. Olsavsky went to Penn State for his undergraduate degree, which gave Wolf the opportunity to lobby him last Saturday in Beaver Stadium. Just Thursday, **Pittsburgh officials announced** they were working with other local government entities and foundations to spend nearly \$250,000 on a consultant to help the area market itself to Amazon.

Philadelphia officials also have wasted no time

chest-thumping. The day Amazon announced it was looking for a host city, Mayor Kenney tweeted: "We think Philadelphia would be a PRIME location for Amazon that would make people SMILE!" City officials, too, have been huddling with their educational, cultural, and other institutions to author a winning bid. Kenney spokeswoman Lauren Hitt said the city already has a large and talented millennial pool, the ability to form partnerships within the community, and a relatively cheap cost of living compared to other cities on the eastern seaboard. "Like the Amazon model, we are consumer-focused, not competition-focused," she said.

Still, when it comes to clout in Harrisburg, Philadelphia lags behind Pittsburgh. The House's speaker, Mike Turzai, is from the Pittsburgh suburbs. That chamber's top Democrats hail from there too. The Senate's top Democrat, Jay Costa, also lives there. But political muscle will only take you so far, said Sen. Vince Hughes (D., Philadelphia). "If the fundamentals aren't there, it doesn't work," said Hughes, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Pittsburgh, he said, is a fine city. But Philadelphia, a transportation hub between New York and Washington with a cluster of higher-learning institutions and a tech corridor, dwarfs it in the factors that count. “Who’s got the better fundamentals? It’s not even a conversation,” he said.

Back in the day, he said, when someone was looking for a place to put a steel mill, they went to Pittsburgh. He views the competition for Amazon the same way — but this time, the scale is tipped in Philadelphia’s favor. “If you don’t have the fundamentals, what are you arguing for?” he said. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Verizon can halt mass distribution of yellow pages and business white pages phone books in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission approved an order on Aug. 31 allowing Verizon to discontinue saturation deliveries of the phone books. The regulatory commission eased the requirements on the distribution of residential phone books in 2010. As part of the commission’s order, Verizon has agreed to ship free phone books or thumb drives with residential and business directory information to residents who ask for them. State officials also granted regulatory relief on phone books to CenturyLink, a legacy phone company like Verizon, which serves several counties in rural central and western Pennsylvania.

But DexYP, which prints and distributes Verizon and CenturyLink phone books, said Thursday that this won’t be the the end of the line for printed directories. Many Pennsylvania residents will continue to receive the ad-supported yellow pages and white pages as the company targets those people most likely to use them. Both listings are contained in one book. “It’s not complete deregulation. It allows us to manage the decline of the product,” Mike Konidaris, DexYP’s director of print services, distribution, telephone company relations, and listing acquisitions, said Thursday.

DexYP will not severely cut distribution of the yellow and white pages books but will “over-deliver” because the printed directories still have value for consumers, Konidaris said. He cited a survey which estimated that 35 to 40 percent of adults use them nationally. Neighborhoods targeted for continued delivery of the phone books will be based on advertising, usage of the phone numbers in the business directories, and demographic data, Konidaris said.

DexYP says that printed phone books still have value for certain consumers and businesses that advertise in them. New yellow pages and white pages books will be distributed in Philadelphia this month and will not be affected by the commission’s August order, he said. Recent years also have brought hard times as consumers replaced landlines with smartphones — the numbers of which are not publicly listed — and now search Google, Yelp, and other online sites for local businesses’ information once contained in the printed books. Yellow pages books nationwide have lost 40 percent of their advertising over the last 15 years, according to industry estimates.

Verizon and CenturyLink told Pennsylvania regulators that they have sought to curtail printed phone directories in 39 states, including New Jersey and Delaware, and 800 markets but have seen minimal complaints. Verizon said that less than 1 percent of its phone customers in Pennsylvania requested the white pages residential directories — sacred household references for decades — five years after it halted saturation deliveries. “I haven’t used the yellow pages for 20 years,” Steve DeShong, owner of 10th Street Hardware in Center City, said Thursday. “We started tossing them like 20 years ago. I haven’t had a landline since 2004. We have young employees who think a landline is a joke.”

Verizon and CenturyLink are required to tell customers of the changes in bill inserts, including how to request printed copies or thumb drives. The phone companies also have to inform the Office of Consumer Advocate and the Small Business Advocate on the transition. Consumers can request printed directories or computer thumb drives with directories for free from 800-888-8448. The directories will also be available at www.dexpages.com. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Seattle mayoral candidate Cary Moon has said she would push to make municipal broadband a reality. Her rival, Jenny Durkan, gave the Urbanist [a more ambiguous answer](#). But Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue already ranks 22nd out of 100 metro areas in broadband availability and adoption. More competition and better access for more people would help, but not be economically decisive. Only 0.3 percent of the metro population, about 10,000, lack availability.

The same isn’t true for many of the [100-plus cities](#) that are vying for Amazon’s HQ2, its planned co-equal headquarters with Seattle (and maybe someday the headquarters). Take Tucson, Ariz., which profaned a 21-foot-tall saguaro cactus by uprooting it and shipping it to the hostile terrain of Seattle (it takes a baby saguaro, native only to the Sonoran Desert, 10 years to grow 1 inch). Tucson ranks 78th out of 100,

in addition to lacking urban bones, a decent transit system and no real international airport. It does have the University of Arizona but, like Phoenix, has a very difficult time keeping young talent. Good luck.

Poor Tulsa, Okla, (a very nice little city) lacks transit and a major research university, and allowed its once grand Art Deco downtown to fall apart. It ranks 97th. According to a new report from the Brookings Institution, most U.S. metros are far behind on broadband, “a fundamental component of the American economy, creating new ways to educate, employ, bring services to, and entertain every person” and “the essential infrastructure for unlocking the internet’s economic benefits.” The United States, according to Speedtest, has only the **ninth-fastest** fixed broadband in the world, even behind Romania.

In America, the digital divide plays out between urban and rural, but also within metro areas in poorer and wealthier neighborhoods. There’s a correlation between slow speeds or lack of availability and high poverty. As Brookings shows, price is a big factor. Twenty-eight advanced nations have less expensive service than USA! USA! It doesn’t help that our broadband providers have near monopolies. Also, they exert enormous influence on lawmakers and regulators to perpetuate the status quo. The report allows you to search by metros and within them, and also offers some policy prescriptions. You can **find it here**.
– **Seattle Times**

Emilio Vazquez, a Democratic ward leader, has been **a state representative for five months**, representing North Philadelphia’s 197th District, after winning a March 21 special election. The **effort to unseat him grinds on in federal court**. U.S. District Judge Joel H. Slomsky heard 90 minutes of arguments Thursday from lawyers for defendants — the City Commissioners, the Democratic City Committee, Secretary of State Pedro Cortes, state House Speaker Mike Turzai — who want him to dismiss lawsuits filed by Republican nominee Lucinda Little, Green Party nominee Cheri Honkala, and two other candidates, Orlando Acosta and Edward Lloyd.

Because of a series of comical missteps, only Little did what it took to get her name listed on the ballot. Vazquez, Honkala, Acosta, and Lloyd ran write-in campaigns. Vazquez won with 73.5 percent of the vote in the district, where Democrats make up 85 percent of the registered voters. The lawsuits, seeking to overturn that result, allege that Election Board members actively campaigned in polling places for Vazquez, urging or intimidating voters to support him. The District Attorney’s Office and state Attorney General’s Office is still investigating those claims. Only one thing is certain: This isn’t over. Slomsky said the lawyers could file a new round of briefs in the matter, probably six weeks from now, before he rules on whether the case will move forward. – **Philadelphia Daily News**

