



# WSTA UPDATE

Wisconsin's Broadband Association®



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## [WSTA Update March 29, 2019](#)

### **Legislative and Political**

#### [Gov. Evers' Budget Would Invest \\$78M To Expand High-Speed Internet](#)

Gov. Tony Evers' budget would invest \$78 million in the state's Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The governor has set a goal to provide all homes and businesses in Wisconsin with high-speed internet by 2025. Angie Dickison, state broadband director with the Public Service Commission, told WPR's "The Morning Show" earlier this week that she's hopeful state lawmakers will sign off on increased funding to expand broadband internet access across the state. "What if your best or only option for internet access was via Wi-Fi at the local fast food restaurant? We hear that from folks," Dickison said. "In 2019, broadband access isn't just nice. It's necessary."

#### [Despite industry ties, Wisconsin's top utility regulator vows independence, public involvement](#)

Rebecca Valcq wants you to get excited about energy. An industry insider, the new chairwoman of the Wisconsin Public Service Commission says she would like to demystify the utility regulation process and encourage more public engagement. "It's really interesting, and it impacts everybody," Valcq said in an interview with the Wisconsin State Journal. "Whatever walk of life, whatever socioeconomic background you have, whatever career path you choose, you are impacted by energy — every day." Valcq, who takes over leadership of the state's utility regulatory agency Saturday, has spent most of her career with the state's largest investor-owned utility and serves at the pleasure of a Democratic governor committed to stronger environmental regulation and renewable energy.

#### [Want to end gerrymandering in Wisconsin? Tony Evers says look to Iowa. Republicans say not so fast.](#)

Partisan gerrymandering returns to the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday nine months after the court punted on a Wisconsin case. Congressional maps drawn during the redistricting process by Republicans in North Carolina and Democrats in Maryland are being challenged. Here's a primer on redistricting and partisan gerrymandering — with a focus on how Iowa has approached the problem.

#### [Scott Walker appointee blocked from returning to work following court ruling](#)

One of the 82 appointees who lost their positions last week amid a ferocious court battle between Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and Republican lawmakers tried to return to work Thursday morning and was blocked at the elevators. Ellen Nowak, appointed by former Gov. Scott Walker as Commissioner of the Public Service

Commission, was stopped by a building security guard and prevented from going to the commission's office in a state building in Madison. Nowak and her adviser, Bob Seitz, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel they believed they could return to their jobs after a Wednesday Appeals Court ruling reinstated some of the laws previously blocked by a lower court ruling that declared unlawful a December legislative session during which Nowak was appointed to the commission.

### [Former Gov. Scott Walker leaves door open for U.S. Senate run](#)

Former Wisconsin governor Scott Walker is back in the spotlight after leaving office in January. Thursday morning, he worked the stage at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference. Walker pushed back on the left while delivering a message to conservative advocates. Walker said, "Common sense conservative ideas work, and they continue to work in Wisconsin, and I think they can work for other states and the nation as a whole." Last November, Walker lost a bid for a third term to the state's education superintendent, Tony Evers. Walker says he's giving speeches across the country. He also said he's working for think tanks, non-profits, and businesses. Walker said, "Almost all of the former governors I talked to said don't just pick one thing. You're going to be restless if you go from one-thousand things to one." Walker is not closing the door on returning to politics. Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) made a campaign promise to leave the U.S. Senate after two terms. When asked if he'd consider running for the seat, Walker said, "It would all depend on the impact. If I feel like I could have a positive impact on the lives of working men and women and their families in Wisconsin, then without a doubt I'd consider it."

### [Wisconsin Emerges as the Top 2020 Battleground](#)

Move over Florida. The 2020 presidential race is ushering in a new premiere battleground state: Wisconsin. Democrats' selection of Milwaukee as the site for the party's national convention next year cements the Badger State as one of the most significant prizes on the electoral map and represents a burgeoning belief that the Rust Belt will factor more crucially than the Sun Belt in this campaign for the White House. Choosing Milwaukee over the larger southern cities of Miami and Houston also discards the historical notion that the convention host city doesn't matter politically. "It's saying something to Wisconsin and, frankly, the whole Midwest: We're here to win. I think that's a statement," says David Pepper, the Ohio Democratic Party chairman who supported Milwaukee's bid.

## **Regulatory and Industry**

### [Rural Groups Urge FCC, Lawmakers Not to Let Satellite Providers Sell Valuable C-Band Spectrum](#)

Several rural groups, including NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association, the Rural Wireless Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and others, have sent a letter to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai and to the chairmen of the House Energy & Commerce Committee and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation urging the policymakers not to allow a "private entity" to oversee the transition of C-band spectrum to use by communications network operators. The private entity to which the letter refers undoubtedly is the C-Band Alliance (CBA), which is comprised of four satellite providers that currently use the spectrum, but no longer need the entire spectrum band. The CBA has asked to be allowed to sell C-band spectrum that its members do not need.

### [Nelson Communications Awarded NTCA Community Grant to Connect Seniors using GrandCare Technology](#)

Telecommunications provider Nelson Communications Cooperative announced today that they have been awarded the NTCA Smart Rural Community Collaboration Challenge Grant to connect remote seniors, using remote monitoring and socialization technology GrandCare Systems. This grant is part of NTCA – The Rural

Broadband Association's (NTCA) initiative to highlight and support efforts that make rural communities vibrant places to live and do business. The grant promotes broadband-enabled solutions for communities and supports collaborative efforts in economic development, education, energy, health care, and public safety. Nelson Communications Cooperative, located in Durand, Wisconsin, plans to use GrandCare technology to provide broadband-enabled elder care services to seniors in rural Wisconsin. GrandCare is a large touchscreen system designed to help seniors easily stay connected with their families. It also provides telehealth, activity monitoring, and many socialization features.

### [FCC offers additional funding to expand rural broadband access](#)

As part of its effort to close the digital divide, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has offered to give roughly 200 carriers in rural areas of the U.S. an additional \$67 million as part of its Connect America Fund. The agency will give the carriers the money if they agree to "significantly expand" access to broadband with at least 25Mbps downloads and 3Mbps in uploads. If the providers hold up their end of the deal, the FCC claims that as many as 110,000 consumers across 43 states would have improved internet service. "The Connect America Fund is key to this effort, providing funding in sparsely populated rural areas where the cost of providing and deploying service can be high," the FCC said in a statement. Carriers have 30 days to decide whether they will accept the money.

### [FCC's O'Rielly Bombards USAC with Questions about Possible E-Rate Overbuilding](#)

FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly has sent a letter to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) expressing concern that USAC may have approved E-Rate funding for school districts planning to build their own fiber networks where fiber already exists. The letter asks for detailed information in response to seven questions, such as "Since the 2014 E-Rate Orders, how many applicants have requested E-Rate funding for special construction of consortium-wide WANs, and how much funding was requested by these applicants?" In the letter, O'Rielly argued that "in addition to wasting ratepayer money, USF-supported overbuilding undermines the ability of existing network providers to bring service to unserved areas in their communities." He said he was motivated to write the letter after learning of "certain Texas school districts" that he said were using E-Rate funding "to overbuild USF-supported providers' fiber networks."

### [Facebook to Build Out Fiber Network in West Virginia](#)

West Virginia's Internet infrastructure is expanding through a collaboration with Facebook, according to an announcement made by Gov. Jim Justice at a Monday press conference. Facebook, through its subsidiary Middle Mile Infrastructure, is planning to build a high capacity fiber optic cable network crossing a portion of West Virginia as part of the company's ongoing larger network infrastructure build stretching from Virginia to Ohio, a press release from Justice's office stated. The state plans to maximize the benefit of this advanced Internet infrastructure by using excess bandwidth on the fiber to expand connectivity into West Virginia communities. The governor said his administration is committed to working with West Virginia's congressional delegation and private partners to improve broadband connectivity in West Virginia. This project provides the foundation necessary for additional broadband infrastructure expansion. Related: [Facebook's Middle Mile Infrastructure Subsidiary to Offer Fiber Transport, Eyes Underserved Markets](#)

### [FCC Says Its Done Implementing Rural Call Completion Act, But Not All Commissioners Agree](#)

The FCC today adopted an order detailing how the commission will implement certain aspects of the rural call completion act that became law early last year. The order establishes service quality standards for intermediate carriers that carry but do not originate or terminate calls to rural areas and who have been

deemed largely responsible for ongoing problems with calls not being completed to rural areas. According to one official at today's FCC meeting where the order was adopted, today's actions complete the work the commission was directed to do by the act. But the two commissioners who approved the order in part and concurred in part – Jessica Rosenworcel and Geoffrey Starks — said the quality standards are not detailed enough. Related: [NTCA Statement on FCC Rural Call Completion Order](#)

### [Windstream files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy after court ruling](#)

Windstream Holdings Inc filed for bankruptcy protection on Monday, days after the rural telecom service provider lost a legal battle against Aurelius Capital Management over a spinoff of its network assets into a real estate investment trust. A U.S. district court on Feb. 15 ruled against Windstream's spinoff of Uniti Group Inc, saying that violated agreements with bondholders, including hedge fund Aurelius. "The Board of Directors and management team determined that filing for voluntary Chapter 11 protection is a necessary step to address the financial impact of (the) decision," Chief Executive Officer Tony Thomas said. The company listed assets in the range of \$10 billion to \$50 billion and liabilities in the range of \$10 billion to \$50 billion.

Related: [Full Speed Ahead for Windstream While in Chapter 11](#)

### [FCC Ready to Authorize \\$140M in Rural Broadband Funding for CAF II Auction Winners, Verizon Among Them](#)

The FCC issued a public notice yesterday stating that it is "ready to authorize" \$140 million in rural broadband funding for a portion of the entities that had winning bids in the Connect America Fund CAF II auction. The commission is still reviewing required information submitted by auction winners and said other winners that meet all requirements to be deemed "ready to authorize" will be included in a future public notice. Entities on the "ready to authorize" list have 10 business days to submit additional information, including a letter of credit from a "bank that is acceptable to the commission," before their funding will be fully authorized, the FCC notes. The CAF II auction, completed in August, awarded a total of \$1.488 billion in funding over 10 years to help cover the cost of bringing broadband to areas where the service is not available today. There were just over 100 winning bidders (103), but some bids were won by consortiums comprised of multiple individual entities, yielding a total of 134 entities now on tap to receive funding, according to yesterday's public notice.

## **Broadband and Internet**

### [USTelecom: Reinventing broadband mapping is needed to close the digital divide](#)

Universal access to broadband is essential to our country's economic future and key to the opportunity for our families and communities across the nation. If policymakers are serious about permanently closing the digital divide and extending broadband to our hardest-to-reach communities, a comprehensive approach that maps every home and business -- with an exact geographic location -- across the country is necessary.

### [Cable Broadband Will Keep Edge Over 5G – Comcast CEO](#)

5G networks are positioned to deliver cable-like broadband speeds into the home, but HFC networks are already gearing up to raise the bar well beyond the reach of the next-gen wireless standard. That sums up how Comcast Corp. Chairman and CEO Brian Roberts views 5G as a competitive, in-home broadband alternative to cable. "We know 5G's coming and what its implications will be," Roberts said Tuesday at the Morgan Stanley Investor Conference in San Francisco, noting that Comcast has people on the ground at Mobile World

Congress in Barcelona. "They [the 5G service providers] are hoping to get to the speeds we're offering today, and by the time they do, we're hoping to be ten times faster or beyond."

### [Report: Global fixed broadband subs at 1.2bn by 2025](#)

The markets and technologies which will drive continued rapid broadband growth over the next decade have been revealed by Broadband Forum and Point Topic in a report which predicts there will be 1.2 billion fixed broadband subscribers by 2025. Following the announcement last October that there are now one billion global fixed broadband subscribers, this report is Point Topic's first worldwide broadband subscribers forecast providing the details behind that milestone, addressing the period between Q3 2018 and Q4 2025.

### [Multi-Tenant Broadband Report: Only Price and Location Matter More Than Broadband](#)

Technology is the third most important consideration for when selecting a multi-tenant residence, according to a survey of Comcast customers conducted by Comcast's Xfinity Communities division, which provides network services for multi-tenant properties. While extremely important, technology still falls behind price and location, but ahead of other considerations such as gyms, clubhouses, outdoor spaces, common areas and even the quality of schools/districts, according to the survey. Respondents from 26 years of age and up said that fast internet speed was the most important amenity a property could offer. After speed, older residents said they were most interested in ubiquitous Wi-Fi access, while younger residents (26-35) desire more smart connected home solutions, such as lights, door locks and thermostats.

## **Cellular and Wireless**

### [Verizon Rolls Out Free Call Filter Service to Fight Robocalls](#)

Robocalls should be less of a problem for Verizon customers going forward. As promised, the carrier this week started rolling out a free version of its Call Filter spam detection and blocking service and began deployment of the STIR/SHAKEN caller ID technology that FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has championed. With the free version of Call Filter, you'll get an alert when a call is likely spam. The service also lets you report unsolicited numbers and will automatically block robocalls based on your preferred level of risk. "Far too frequently, customers tell me they want relief from the bombardment of bothersome robocalls," Ronan Dunne, president of Verizon's consumer unit, said in a statement. "I'm confident that our new, free version of Call Filter and STIR/SHAKEN will put a big dent in the problem."

### [Verizon's 5G network for mobile launches on April 11 in these two lucky U.S. cities](#)

Mark your calendars for April 11, because that's when Verizon switches on its "real" 5G network in two U.S. cities. Verizon's "5G Ultra Wideband Network" is the real deal — it works with phones and other mobile devices just like 4G LTE — and isn't to be confused with the company's "home" 5G network, which launched last year in select cities. This is great news because it means there will be a working 5G network to use the handful of new 5G smartphones launching this year on. But there is some fine print to be aware of. Because, of course, there is! First, the 5G network's only launching in Chicago and Minneapolis on April 11. Live in a different city? Tough luck! You won't be getting 5G yet. Verizon says its new 5G network will launch in "more than 30 markets" in 2019 but stopped short at announcing rollout dates for any other U.S. cities.

## [T-Mobile's broadband strategy will focus on providing service to rural and underserved areas first](#)

T-Mobile is launching a pilot for delivering in-home internet service using its wireless LTE network. The news comes on the heels of the company's announcement earlier this month that it would enter the broadband market. The pilot is currently for existing T-Mobile customers and by invitation-only — that amounts to availability for around 0.04% of US households this year. The carrier hopes to expand the service to cover more than half of all US households with 5G by 2024, if it gets approval to merge with Sprint.

## [FCC Auction Tops \\$1.5 Billion](#)

The FCC's 24 GHz spectrum auction has pushed past \$1.5 billion in bids, more than double the take from the previous, 28 GHz auction. Both are meant to free up spectrum for 5G. The 24 GHz (high-band, millimeter wave) auction comprises 2,909 licenses divided up by partial economic areas. After round 27, the total was \$1,544,649,275, with almost 5% of that total accounted for in the top two markets--New York with a high bid of \$41,113,000 and L.A. with a high bid of \$31,635,000. It is a clock auction, with the FCC raising the price after each round for licenses for which there is more demand than supply, which is the case in New York and L.A. So, for round 28, the opening bid will need to be \$45,225,000 and for L.A., \$37,799,000. Rounding out the top five markets with the highest bids are Chicago with \$18,694,000, San Francisco with \$14,735,000 and Baltimore-Washington with \$14,068,000.

## **IPTV and Video**

### [TDS TV for Business Will be in All of Company's TDS TV Markets](#)

TDS announced today that it is now offering its all-digital TV service to business customers in communities where TDS TV is currently offered to residential customers. The offering, dubbed TDS TV for Business, can help simplify billing, technical support and any account changes for businesses that already have phone and internet services, according to TDS. The service also offers digital picture and sound quality that won't be affected by inclement weather as well as access to more than 110 channels, including more than 80 high definition channels, the company said. Among the content offerings are an array of major sports channels, including NFL Network, Big Ten Network, MLB Network, Golf Channel, and the SEC Network.

### [ACA Changes Name to America's Communications Association](#)

The American Cable Association has changed its name to ACA -- America's Communications Association, a move the trade organization said better reflects its leadership role in the rapidly growing telecommunications industry. ACA made the announcement as it kicked off its 26th annual Summit, held at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday. The ACA represents more than 700 smaller and medium-sized independent communications companies. Its new day-to-day name -- ACA Connects -- further reinforces the value of the connections those communications enhance.

### [Multichannel Video Losses In Q4 'Propel' 2018 Slide](#)

Traditional multichannel video losses "swelled" in the fourth quarter to push the full-year decline to a new benchmark in changing viewer preferences. That's according to new data released Tuesday from S&P Global Market Intelligence's Kagan arm. Combined, the cable, direct broadcast satellite (DBS) and telecom multichannel sectors lost nearly 1.1 million subscriptions in the fourth quarter, which pushed the full-year decline to 4 million, Kagan data show. DBS services accounted for more than half of the annual loss. Virtual platforms partially offset the traditional multichannel declines, keeping those customers in a subscription

package of live linear channels, but gains to services such as Hulu with Live TV and YouTube TV were not enough to prevent the space from shrinking.

### [AT&T Gets Serious About Sunsetting Satellites](#)

In case you haven't heard, AT&T is done launching DirecTV satellites. The telecom, which purchased satellite-TV company DirecTV for \$48.5 billion in 2015, has been not-so-quietly developing an Android TV-powered set-top box that would receive video channels over the open internet. Now AT&T executives are openly discussing the Osprey, a piece of hardware that will eventually replace satellite receivers and dishes in customers' homes — and save the company gobs of money in the process. "The biggest cost we have is the truck roll and getting that installation out," AT&T chief financial officer John Stephens said at the Deutsche Bank Media, Internet & Telecom Conference.

### [OTT Subscribers Return to Living Room, Says Parks Associates](#)

There's just something special about watching television on a big screen in the living room—at least that's what a majority of U.S. broadband households subscribing to OTT services say. New data from research firm Parks Associates reveals 52 percent of these broadband households watch their OTT TV programs, movies, live event coverage and other content on a TV connected to the internet. "While the total number of hours consuming videos has declined, consumers are watching more internet video on the largest screen available," says Parks Associates Research Analyst Billy Nayden. "The number of hours consumers report watching video on a TV increased for the first time since 2014, with connected devices enabling internet video services on TV and shifting consumers away from PC and mobile viewing."