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In this issue, it's all Chapter 30 all the time as Gov. Edward G. Rendell caps months - years - of intense negotiations and signs House Bill 30 into law just 55 minutes before his 10 days to act would have run out. The bill was championed by rural, education, labor, business and consumer interests after some fine-tuning in the Senate led mainly by Sen. Jake Corman, R-Centre. The extension of the original Chapter 30 law, passed in 1993, will pump millions into the state's network, schools and economic development initiatives. On the national front, WiMax technology continues to win praise and a new report shows that U.S. fiber-enabled homes doubled in 2004. Closer to home, a Lehigh Valley firm is targeting Schuylkill, Carbon and southern Luzerne County for fiber optic connections. In Allentown, A proposal to install a wireless Internet network in south Bethlehem remains on track. On the other end of the state, a citywide wireless fidelity or "Wi-Fi" Internet connection is still a long way off," says The Post-Gazette.

From The Papers

NY Times looks at WiMax technology, huge potential for wireless broadband access.
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As cable companies in Schuylkill County announce an upgrade to digital service, a Lehigh Valley firm is targeting Schuylkill, Carbon and southern Luzerne County for fiber optic connections.
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A proposal to install a wireless Internet network in south Bethlehem remains on track.
[Click Here](#)

U.S. fiber-enabled homes doubled in 2004.
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In Pittsburgh, "... a citywide wireless fidelity or "Wi-Fi" Internet connection is still a long way off," says The Post-Gazette.
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Sweeping Telecommunications Legislation Signed Into Law

Governor Rendell signed legislation that will have a dramatic impact on both broadband telecommunications deployment and economic development projects statewide. The sweeping telecommunications bill, which renews the 1993 Chapter 30 changes to the PUC code, received the backing of industry groups, organized labor, and school administrators, whose districts stand to gain significantly from the economic development provisions in the new law. The bill signing was met with praise by the telecommunications industry.

"Gov. Rendell's signature of House Bill 30 into law is the right call for Pennsylvanians," said James V. O'Rourke, president and CEO of Verizon Pennsylvania. "House Bill 30 builds on the solid telecom foundation laid over the past decade to deliver broadband services throughout the commonwealth – the most comprehensive deployment plan in the country.

"This legislation enjoyed a broad base of support from the Pennsylvania School Board Association, the Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units and other members of the education community; labor unions like the AFL-CIO and Communications Workers of America; economic development groups like the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce and the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities; and companies like Verizon and other members of the Pennsylvania Telephone Association. We also were pleased to resolve the concerns of the Office of Consumer Advocate and the City of Philadelphia. "

The bill made its way to the Governor when the House overwhelmingly agreed to the Senate amendments to HB 30, which establishes a timetable for statewide broadband deployment and contains a number of economic development provisions that strengthen the legislation. The measure includes over \$100 million in contributions to the community with approximately \$60 million going directly to schools for accelerating broadband deployment. The \$60 million grant program established within the Department of Education will provide funding to schools for broadband connections, service, equipment, distance learning programs and training.

"This is a direct consumer benefit that I negotiated that will place broadband technologies inside of schools throughout the state and help those schools that still lack access to technologies," said State Senator Jake Corman, R-Centre, who took the lead in negotiations over the legislation for the Senate.

The legislation establishes financial incentives for incumbent phone carriers to deploy broadband in all regions of the state. Legislative approval of the bill would renew a 1993 law that established a separate and slower timetable for statewide broadband deployment. In the ten years since the original Chapter 30 law was passed, technological advances, and a series of legislative and regulatory initiatives have changed the face of competition in the industry, particularly in the local phone arena where the incumbents have been battling with competitive carriers (CLECs) for market share.

More specifically, the new law accomplishes the following:

- * Hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband services before the 2015 deadline established under the original Chapter 30. In some rural areas, broadband will be universally available by the end of 2008.
- * Provides financial assistance to school districts to support our goal of ensuring that every school in the Commonwealth has access to broadband and high-speed Internet service.
- * Recognizes the importance of telecommunications infrastructure to economic development by creating a mechanism for DCED to accelerate broadband deployment.
- * Establishes a special program to help communities aggregate the demand for broadband service and requiring local telephone companies to respond to the demand for service in a more timely fashion.
- * Makes it easier for more low-income Pennsylvanians to enroll in federal Lifeline service, which will help them install phones and pay their monthly bills.
- * Protects access to basic telephone services even in the most rural and economically depressed areas of the state.
- * Limits the price increases for basic service, particularly in harder to serve rural areas.
- * Ensures that the PUC retains its authority to oversee the quality of local telephone service.

Telecommunications Group Urges Federal Regulators to Pressure AT&T to Pay Fees

The United States Telecom Association (USTA) recently sent an letter to the Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission urging them to take action on an AT&T petition in which the company asks the Commission to validate its unlawful withholding of payments for access charges and universal service on phone card sales. The petition has been pending at the Commission for a year and a half. In that time, AT&T has avoided paying \$500 million in mandatory fees.

"While this petition has been languishing at the Commission for a year and a half, AT&T has flagrantly exploited the law to benefit the company's bottom line at consumer expense," said Walter B. McCormick, Jr., President and CEO of USTA. "AT&T's refusal to pay the access charges and universal service contributions that it owes on calling card sales is unlawful and irresponsible and hurts rural America. This rogue behavior must be reversed quickly to avoid permanent disruption to the nation's communications system. "

Network Reliability Group to Hold Third Meeting; Progress of Working Groups to be discussed

The FCC's Network Reliability and Interoperability Council ("Council") will hold a meeting on Monday, December 6, 2004, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Commission Meeting Room, TW-C305 at 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C.

The Council was established by the Federal Communications Commission to bring together leaders of the telecommunications industry and telecommunications experts from academic, consumer, and other organizations to explore and recommend measures that will enhance network security and reliability.

At this third meeting under the Council's new charter, the Council will discuss the progress of working groups. Members of the general public may attend the meeting. The Federal Communications Commission will attempt to accommodate as many people as possible. Admittance, however, will be limited to the seating available.

Unless so requested by the Council's Chair, there will be no public oral participation, but the public may submit written comments to Jeffery Goldthorp, the Federal Communications Commission's Designated Federal Officer for the Network Reliability and Interoperability Council, before the meeting. Mr. Goldthorp's U.S. Postal Service mail address is Jeffery Goldthorp, Chief, Network Technology Division, Office of Engineering and Technology, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, SW., Room 7-A325, Washington, DC 20554. Mr. Goldthorp's e-mail address is Jeffery@Goldthorp@fcc.gov.

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