

Pennsylvania Telephone Association

"The Communications Leader in Pennsylvania"

The Friday Report

December 18, 2009

INDUSTRY NEWS

- Comcast this week became the first major cable company to enter the online television market with its Fancast Xfinity service. Designed to compete against products like Hulu (a current offering of NBC, soon likely to be acquired by Comcast), Fancast will allow Comcast customers who subscribe to Internet and cable service to access full-length episodes of TV shows like the Sopranos and recently released movies, all totaling about 2,000 hours of free programming.
- The free Wi-Fi network broadened this week as both Verizon Wireless and AT&T expanded their offerings. VZW is adding free access to Wi-Fi for subscribers to its Mobile Broadband and Global Access data plans for laptops and netbooks. The freebie does not extend to smartphone users. For AT&T, the expansion comes in the form of free service to all visitors at 11,000 McDonald's restaurants nationwide. Patrons had been paying \$2.95 for two hours of access.

CONGRESS NEWS

- Earlier this week, the U.S. House passed the PHONE Act (Preventing Harassment through Outbound Number Enforcement) which prohibits caller ID "spoofing." The prime sponsor of the legislation, Virginia Democrat Robert Scott, said that the initiative is necessary to combat the growing problem of individuals posing as bank officials in an effort to solicit personal information. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives is not far behind, as its House Consumer Affairs Committee unanimously passed House Bill 2064, on Wednesday, which imposes penalties for spoofing.
- FCC Commissioner staffs would expand under legislation unveiled this week by Senators Mark Warner (D-VA), and Olympia Snowe (R-ME). The bill calls for the hiring of either a computer scientist or electrical engineer in each office to provide technical consultation as a complement to the three professionals and one secretary each Commissioner's office is now entitled to.

THE DAILY NUMBER

- 95.7

According to the most recent FCC Subscribership Report, 95.7 percent of U.S. households had telephone service as of July 2009, the highest penetration level since the report commenced in 1983. As it historically has, Pennsylvania fared quite well, with a penetration rate of 97.9 percent.

QUOTABLE

- *“In my view, the amendments proposed by staff accurately reflect the scope of the rulemaking and codify the waivers currently granted to LECs that offer bundled service packages to customers. Additionally, the amendments provide for flexibility in the billing and application of payments for bundled service packages and therefore, are consistent with the statutory mandates of Chapter 30. The recommendation before us today resolves the concerns discussed in my prior dissent and I fully support the revised final rulemaking.”*

Excerpt from the Statement of PUC Commissioner Kim Pizzigrilli in support of the amended rulemaking regarding the regulation of bundled service packages. (The Commission unanimously approved the matter at it's Public Meeting yesterday) PTA had advocated, among other things, that the new regulations effectively codify the waiver from certain Chapter 64 requirements under which companies currently operate.