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**December 9, 2020 - Public Issue**

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## **ACA CONNECTS: KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **ACA Connects Chairman Patricia Jo Boyers Congratulates Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers On Her Historic Election As Republican Leader Of The House Energy and Commerce Committee**

ACA Connects Chairman Patricia Jo Boyers, who is President of BOYCOM Vision in Poplar Bluff, Mo., issued the following statement on Dec. 2 on the election of Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) as the new Republican Leader of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, beginning in the 117th Congress:



“ACA Connects congratulates Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers on her historic election as the first woman to become the Republican Leader of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. This committee oversees a vast array of sectors of vital importance to our nation. We appreciate all her time and effort on many topics of impact and importance to our ACA Connects membership and look forward to further work on the issues of importance to the video and broadband industry.

“We have always respected her ability to work with everyone on the tough issues the committee must face. We have also appreciated her willingness to look out for small businesses and the rural communities that so many of our members serve.

“Importantly, we are grateful that Rep. McMorris Rodgers – coming from a congressional district in eastern Washington state noted for its rural profile – will ensure that the rural voice of America remains front and center on so many policy decisions. [Read more.](#)”

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### **ACA Connects Congratulates FCC On Concluding RDOF Phase I Auction — A Big Step Toward Closing Rural Digital Divide**

ACA Connects President and CEO Matthew M. Polka issued the following statement on Dec. 7 regarding the completion of the Federal Communications Commission’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction:



“ACA Connects congratulates the FCC on the just-completed Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction, as well as the numerous ACA Connects members who will be receiving RDOF support to help close the digital divide. We especially applaud the FCC for ensuring that

funding would only go to truly underserved areas, thus maximizing use of limited support and not undermining private investment.

“In addition, by awarding support through a competitive process open to incumbent providers and new entrants alike, the RDOF program will bring higher speed broadband service to unserved areas with far less federal support than has been allocated in the past.

“Further, by prioritizing bids for the highest speed services, the auction appears to have yielded substantial benefits for consumers in unserved areas, with more than 99.7% of locations receiving at least 100 Mbps service. Any future federal, state and local government broadband grant program should adopt these same requirements and processes in awarding support.”

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## **ACA Connects Congratulates Nathan Simington On His Senate Confirmation To Serve On The Federal Communications Commission**

ACA Connects President and CEO Matthew M. Polka issued the following statement on Dec. 8 regarding the Senate confirmation of Nathan Simington to serve as a Commissioner at the Federal Communications Commission:



“ACA Connects congratulates Commissioner Nathan Simington on his Senate confirmation, and we look forward to working with him on the key issues at the top of the country’s communications agenda, including efforts to deliver high-performance broadband service to all Americans.”

“ACA Connects agrees with Commissioner Simington, who noted in his Senate testimony last month that we are much closer to closing the digital divide today than we were a few short years ago but we must continue to seek opportunities to improve and extend connectivity.”

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## **ACA Connects Salutes FCC Chairman Ajit Pai On His Time Serving The American Public At The Nation’s Chief Communications Regulatory Body**

ACA Connects President and CEO Matthew M. Polka issued the following statement on Nov. 30 regarding FCC Chairman Ajit Pai’s announcement that he will leave the agency on Jan. 20, 2021:



“ACA Connects salutes FCC Chairman Ajit Pai on his tenure at the agency, including his time as a Commissioner before rising to Chairman in 2017. We commend him on his efforts to close the digital divide, eliminate outdated regulations, and account for the disparate impact that government rules and regulations have on small businesses.

“With respect to broadband, his FCC fostered a regulatory environment that facilitated enormous investment, such that during the COVID-19 emergency our broadband networks were fully capable of supporting Americans working from home.

“In addition, Chairman Pai’s FCC reformed and updated the universal service programs, shrinking the digital divide. On video, his FCC modernized numerous media rules and implemented the retransmission consent/good faith provisions for buying groups of smaller MVPDs, which allowed these providers to better compete. Finally, his FCC’s C-Band Order allowed earth station operators the option to make C-band transition decisions that meet their needs.

“We wish Chairman Pai nothing but the best in his bright future and thank him for his many years of public service.”

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## **ACA CONNECTS: FILINGS**

ACA Connects has been actively representing independent cable in many other ways and on many issues in Washington, D.C. Those efforts are described in the filings, letters, and testimonies linked below for your review:

**[11/17: FCC Ex Parte re Establishing the Digital Opportunity Data Collection and Modernizing the FCC Form 477 Data Program w/ Wireline Competition Bureau](#)**

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## **ACA CONNECTS: NEWS HEADLINES**

**[SpaceX Gets \\$886M From FCC For Starlink In 35 States](#)** (Ars Technica, 12/7)

SpaceX has been awarded \$885.51 million by the FCC to provide Starlink broadband to 642,925 rural homes and businesses in 35 states. The satellite provider was one of the biggest winners in the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction, the results of which were released Dec. 7.

**[Ritter Communications Opens Its \\$8M Data Center](#)** (Release, 11/30)

Jonesboro, Ark. – Ritter Communications, an Arkansas-based regional telecommunications provider, announced the opening of a new \$8 million multi-user data and cloud storage facility in Northeast Arkansas, drawing the praise of Gov. Asa Hutchinson. The Ritter Communications Data Technology Center is the first service provider-grade data center to serve Northeast Arkansas businesses and the only one of its kind in the region.

**[N.D.'s MLGC Lights Up 5-Gig Residential Broadband Service](#)** (Light Reading, 12/4)

MLGC is kicking it up a few notches with the debut of a 5 Gbit/s residential broadband service in a handful of North Dakota communities, including Kindred, Davenport, Amber Plains/Round Hill, Enderlin, Finley and Cooperstown. MLGC's uncapped 5-Gig service sells for \$199 per month, said Tyler Kilde, the company's president and general manager.

**[Tongue River Alleges 'Inside Deal' On B'band Funding](#)** (Sheridan Press, 12/4)

Ranchester, Wyo. -- A Tongue River broadband company alleged irresponsible action on the part of Wyoming Business Council following a decision to fund its competitor. The complaint reached the FCC in Washington, D.C., and Gov. Mark Gordon through a formal letter from FCC Commissioner Mike O’Rielly Nov. 25. In an initial letter written by Tongue River Communications owner Robert Jacobson published on ACA Connects, he alleged the Wyoming Business Council provided Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funds to Tongue River Communications’ direct competitor, Visionary, without due process.

**[Dish Now Missing 236 TV Chs. Due To Retrans Fee Fights](#)** (TV Answer Man, 12/5)

Dish is now without at least 236 channels due to eight different carriage battles that span from last Wednesday to 25 months ago. The blacked-out channels include 212 local network affiliates, and 24 premium or regional sports networks. The oldest fight dates back to November 2018 when Dish, and its live streaming service, Sling TV, lost both HBO and Cinemax after Dish could not reach a new carriage agreement with the channels’ owner, AT&T.

**[Sports Rebates May Return \\$1.1B To Pay-TV Subs](#)** (Bloomberg, 12/2)

More than \$1 billion will soon start to flow back to U.S. pay-TV subscribers in the form of refunds and credits, compensating them for the year’s many pandemic-related sports cancellations. Pay-TV providers like AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications Inc. and Charter Communications Inc. kept collecting sports-programming fees even as the Covid-19 outbreak canceled sporting events like college basketball tournaments and disrupted pro

leagues like the MLB, NBA and NHL.

### **FCC: Home 'Classrooms' Ineligible For Broadband Subsidy (Next TV, 12/1)**

The FCC has released its final list of services eligible for E-rate broadband subsidy money meant to help boost school and library connectivity, but in-home service and equipment for pandemic-driven remote learning did not make the cut. In releasing the final eligible services for funding on Nov. 30, the Wireline Competition Bureau said requests that the funds also go to home "classrooms" -- given the shutdowns and remote learning mandates -- were beyond the scope of the proceeding.

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## **ACA CONNECTS: ACTION BRIEF TOP THREE**

### **Most-Clicked Links From Nov. 18 ACAction Brief:**

1. [Hulu To Hike Live TV Price By 18% In December \(Deadline, 11/16\)](#)
2. [Hansen Elected To NCTC Board \(The Cabin, 11/11\)](#)
3. [Armstrong Avenges Hunger With Annual Food Drive \(Herald Dispatch, 11/15\)](#)

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## **ABOUT ACA CONNECTS**

Across this vast country, small and rural markets participate in the digital revolution by receiving video, broadband, and phone services from more than 700 small and medium-sized independent operators represented by ACA Connects - America's Communications Association.

ACA Connects' members -- cable, phone, and fiber-to-the-home operators and municipalities -- deliver affordable basic and advanced services to nearly 8 million households and businesses. ACA Connects members operate in every state, offering high-definition television, next generation Internet access, and digital phone service.



Access to advanced communications is not a luxury but a critical necessity for consumers and companies, schools and hospitals. America's economic prosperity in smaller markets and rural areas depends on the growth and success of ACA Connects members, who believe a connected nation, is a united nation.

ACA Connects asks lawmakers and regulators to ensure fair treatment so that small and medium-sized independent operators may continue to supply affordable video, broadband, and phone services to Main Street America. Through active participation in the policymaking process, ACA Connects members and leaders advocate for the interests of their customers, their companies, and their communities to help ensure the continued viability of their way of life in hometown America.

For more information, visit [www.acaconnects.org](http://www.acaconnects.org), or contact:

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