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**Armstrong was the recipient of the 2017 Veteran Employer of the Year Award, presented by Veterans Cable Services.** Co-founders of Veterans Cable, John Piazza and Tony Accamando, presented the award to Armstrong President, Jeff A. Ross at the annual Armstrong Awards Banquet, in recognition of their commitment to veteran causes.

“Choosing Armstrong as recipient of the 2017 Veteran Employer of The Year Award was an easy choice for Veterans Cable Services,” stated Tony Accamando, Co-founder. “For over four decades I have known the folks at Armstrong. Their personal commitments, as well as that of their company in support of community based organizations, ranks them at the top of the list of communications companies,” continued Accamando. “Supporting veteran’s causes is nothing new to Armstrong as they have always recognized the unselfish sacrifices made by our brave men and women in uniform. This award merely recognizes the obvious.” Armstrong and Veterans Cable Services have a long relationship together.”

“When we started Veterans Cable back in 1984, Armstrong was one of our first customers,” stated John Piazza, Co-founder. “Thirty years later, Tony and I decided to revive Veterans Cable Services in 2014. Once again, Armstrong was our first customer.”

“We are honored and humbled by this recognition,” stated Jeff Ross, “as well as the extent of the involvement from our communities and employees.” Armstrong most recently partnered with Veterans Cable for the Healing Heroes initiative. Starting on Veteran’s Day of 2016, Healing Heroes was created to raise enough funds to donate five service dogs to qualifying disabled veterans, as well as to raise awareness of the needs of veterans. As of today, Armstrong has raised enough to donate eight dogs, and is working on raising funds for the ninth now. “Tony and I were overwhelmed with the ‘Healing Heroes’ mission. The fact that they were able to get everyone involved including all of their employees and customers is powerful,” continued Piazza, “Not only did they raise awareness and improve the quality of life for Veterans, they also helped save Veteran lives.” – **Armstrong news release CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES AT ARMSTRONG!**

[Pennsylvania Rep. Martin Causer](#), R-Turtlepoint, went to the White House on Tuesday, where he attended a conference geared toward removing barriers to success for rural America. He called the Rural Prosperity with State and Local Leaders event refreshing with rural issues being in the spotlight at such a high level of government. Rural Pennsylvania — and rural America — have some significant needs, Causer said. “I think it was a great meeting. I was honored to be asked to attend,” said Causer, who was the only elected official from Pennsylvania to attend the event.

During the event, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue concentrated on the need to build up technology infrastructure in rural communities, citing its impact on precision agriculture, telemedicine, education, commerce and overall quality of life. He pointed to President Donald Trump’s recent executive order aimed at streamlining and expediting requests to locate broadband facilities in rural America. Such an effort would bring high-speed internet service to an estimated 39 percent of rural Americans who do not currently have the service. “We have been talking a lot about rural broadband



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on the state level and what we can do legislatively to help rural areas like ours. It really is a vital component to rebuilding our rural economy,” said Causer, who is the chairman of the state House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. Causer said Perdue also talked about other priorities for the USDA, including trade, labor, education and regulatory reform, and about

the threat of invasive species to the agriculture industry. “I was also encouraged by the secretary’s

[gubernatorial run](#)

**Philadelphia Inquirer**  
[Bob Brady exits, candidacy flood gates open in First Congressional District](#)

comments about the United States Forest Service and how they need to do a better job of managing our forests to ensure they are both healthy and productive to support our rural economy,” Causer said.

He said he is optimistic at the progress being made into rural issues, and said cooperation and coordination at all levels of government is vital into reaching those goals. “The people who addressed the conference (Tuesday) clearly recognize the importance of this sector of our economy and the people who live in our rural communities,” he said.

Finally, after years of neglect from the prior administration, Causer said rural America is getting needed and deserved attention and support. The Rural Prosperity with State and Local Leaders event included leaders from across the United States, including legislators, state agriculture secretaries and lieutenant governors. Although Causer said he did not see Trump, he did get a chance to listen to Vice President Mike Pence. – **Bradford (McKean Co.) Era**

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No one can accuse the Trump administration of being boring, even when it comes to telecom. According to leaked documents, there is [a proposal going around the White House](#) to build a federally owned 5G telecommunications system — the next version of a mobile broadband network — or perhaps even to nationalize the 5G networks that private telecom companies are now building. (5G is the “fifth generation” wireless protocol, which promises to be faster and more secure than its predecessor, 4G, but requires new antennas and cell towers.)

The White House proposal, which at the moment is just an idea, appears driven by concerns about security threats related to China’s development of 5G networks. But the strongest case for building a national network is different. Done right, a national 5G network could save a lot of Americans a lot of money and revive competition in what has become an entrenched oligopoly. Done wrong, on the other hand, it could look like something out of Hugo Chávez’s disastrous economic playbook.

Americans spend an extraordinary amount of money on bandwidth. The cable industry is the worst offender: Since cable providers have little effective competition, cable bills have grown at many times the rate of inflation and can easily reach thousands of dollars per year. Mobile phone service is not exactly a bargain, either. And with plans to connect cars, toasters and pets to the internet, broadband bills may continue to soar. These bills, collectively, function like a private tax on the whole economy. Could a public 5G network cut that tax?

A national 5G network would be a kind of 21st-century Tennessee Valley Authority. The government would build or lease towers across the country, prioritizing underserved areas, and set up a public utility that sold bandwidth at cost. This cheap bandwidth would be made available for resale by anyone who wanted to provide home broadband or wireless, thus creating a new business model for small local resellers.

The new competition might save people money in a few ways. First, it could create price competition for the four national carriers (Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile and Sprint). More important, it could do the same for cable broadband, whose providers face minimal competition in most areas. And it might give small telecom businesses a new lease on life. As a result, prices could be cheaper and jobs could be created.

As with any public infrastructure, the case for it is strongest if private industry won’t build it and the public benefit is considerable. The case for public roads rests on the assumption that private industry won’t build roads that reach the whole country. In telecom, we see a similar pattern: Companies like Verizon have been happy to build fiber-optic or 4G service in cities like Boston and New York but are less excited about doing so in poor and rural America.

But the case for a national 5G network comes with two major caveats. First, it has to be done right: A strongman approach — nationalizing AT&T’s and Verizon’s nascent networks instead of building new ones — is too Chávez-esque. Seizing private assets in peacetime without good reason sets a dangerous precedent. And you don’t need to be paranoid to fear the combination of the world’s largest government and largest telecommunication companies. Any federally owned 5G network would need to have privacy protections and be as separate from the political branches as possible. The second caveat is that while the government can be good at building things, its management record is less inspiring. Any national network it builds should be government-owned for its first decade or so, and then sold off to the highest bidder.

The idea of “Trump 5G” has come as an unwelcome shock to the major telecommunications firms and their allies. Ajit Pai, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, warned that “any federal effort to construct a nationalized 5G network would be a costly and counterproductive distraction” from winning “the 5G war.” Presumably, he doesn’t mean that competition is bad, but that a plan for nationalization will cause private industry to stop investing in its networks. Fair enough. But the

economy has countless other areas in which private and public programs compete, and the key question is how considerable the loss of private incentives would really be, and whether the public benefits compensate for it.

That's a tough call. But if winning the 5G war is the F.C.C.'s priority, a federal network might be how we get 5G to more citizens more quickly. It is surely a crazy idea, but we live in crazy times, and if done right, it merits serious consideration. – ***New York Times***

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In the 12-person field seeking to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent, Democrat Greg Edwards and Republican Ryan Mackenzie starting the new year with the largest campaign war chests in their respective primary contests. Edwards, an Allentown pastor who lives in Upper Macungie Township, had \$162,000 on hand heading into January. And Mackenzie, a state legislator who lives in Lower Macungie Township, had \$204,000, [according to financial reports due to the Federal Election Commission yesterday](#).

Democrat Susan Wild trails Edwards with \$101,000 on hand — she [held her official kick-off event last night](#), taking aim at President Donald Trump. On the Republican side, Mackenzie's closest Republican rival, Marty Nothstein, had \$112,000 at the beginning of January. Republican Mike Pries reported \$72,000 on hand.

In the battle to unseat Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf, [the Associated Press reports](#) that Republican gubernatorial candidates Paul Mango and Scott Wagner are donating heavily to their campaigns, putting up millions of their own dollars. Mango reported \$5.5 million in the bank and gave himself \$6.7 million. Wagner had \$5.9 million in the bank as of Dec. 31 and had given himself more than \$7.5 million in loans and other contributions. State House Speaker Mike Turzai's campaign reported just over \$1 million in the bank, and Republican Laura Ellsworth's campaign had \$417,000 on hand.

Wolf, meanwhile, has just more than \$11 million as of Dec. 31 — and no serious primary challenger. No redrawn maps yet, and Republicans have grouched that [there's still no majority opinion from the state Supreme Court](#) offering more details on drawing those maps. There is a new filing from the top Senate Republican, responding to the Supreme Court's order to turn over data needed to craft a new congressional map if the legislative-drawn one doesn't pass muster. Senate President Pro Tem Joe Scarnati [responded to the court order with a big "nope."](#)

As for the GOP's plea to the U.S. Supreme Court to block the state Supreme Court decision, Justice Samuel Alito [has given the League of Women Voters — who challenged Pennsylvania's maps — until 4 p.m. Friday](#) to respond to the Republicans' request. – ***Allentown Morning Call***

