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February 12, 2018

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FCC are on a
collision course
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neutrality — and
nobody's sure
how it'll go

Politico
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America

Fox News
Trump
infrastructure
plan relies on
state, local
funding

The Guardian
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old people?
Over-55s flock in
as the young
leave

Pennlive

Legislation to make spoofing a crime in Pennsylvania is moving through the General Assembly. Last week, the House of Representatives unanimously approved House Bill 979 and sent it to the Senate for consideration.

The proposal would make it illegal for people to use specialized equipment to change the caller identification information that is displayed on a telephone. This tactic allows individuals to make it appear that a call is coming from a number or business other than that of the actual caller and can be used to defraud, harass or induce call recipients to divulge sensitive or confidential information.

The legislation, sponsored by **Rep. Karen Boback**, R-117, Harveys Lake, would make it a misdemeanor for any person to cause false caller identification information to be displayed on a recipient's telephone, with the intent to harass or defraud the call recipient. The penalty for a first offense would be a \$2,500 fine and up to one year in prison. Second or subsequent offenses would be subject to a \$5,000 fine and up to two years in prison.

House Bill 979 would not apply to the blocking of caller identification information to law enforcement agencies, federal intelligence or security agencies, or to a telecommunications, broadband or voice-over-internet protocol service provider that is acting solely as an intermediary for the transmission of service between the caller and call recipient.

Thousands of Pennsylvanians receive spoofing calls every day. Senior citizens are particularly susceptible to this scam, and the hope is we can enact the legislation soon to help ensure this illegal practice is stopped. If you believe you have been a victim of spoofing, please contact your local authorities. — **Op-ed by Rep. Tarah Toohil** (R-Luzerne) in **Hazleton Standard-Speaker**

Cable giant Comcast Corp. is contemplating reviving its pursuit of 21st Century Fox, after its bid for the company's entertainment assets was turned down despite being over 15% higher than that of eventual buyer Walt Disney Co., according to people familiar with the situation.

[**Pa. Republican Party throws its backing to Scott Wagner, Jeff Bartos for governor/lt. governor**](#)

[**Philadelphia Inquirer Are Democrats enthused for Pa. Gov. Tom Wolf's reelection campaign?**](#)

[**Philadelphia Inquirer Pa. Republicans have proposed a new congressional map. Democrats say it's still gerrymandered.**](#)

[**Philadelphia Daily News Want less gerrymandering? Bring back Amanda Holt**](#)

Disney struck a deal with Fox in December, agreeing to pay \$52.4 billion in stock. Fox turned down a Comcast offer that was in the low-\$60 billions range, the people said. The assets on the table in both offers were essentially the same, including the Twentieth Century Fox movie and TV studio, international pay TV properties and some U.S. cable networks. Fox's primary concern about the Comcast bid was that a tie-up between the companies would face significant antitrust risks, people familiar with the discussions said.

A Comcast acquisition of Fox would be a "vertical" deal adding more cable TV channels to a company that also is a powerhouse in channel-distribution. The government signaled concerns about vertical deals when it sued to block AT&T Inc.'s acquisition of Time Warner Inc., a case that heads to trial next month. Some Wall Street analysts noted the potential roadblocks in Washington to a Comcast-Fox deal.

Comcast believed it had offered substantial protections in its offer against antitrust risk, some of the people familiar with the situation said. Fox executives positioned the Disney deal as a chance for its investors to benefit from Disney's vast content machine and plans to battle the likes of Netflix Inc. with direct-to-consumer streaming services. After an asset sale, the remaining "new Fox" would have properties including the Fox broadcast network, Fox News and Fox Sports 1. 21st Century Fox Chief Executive James Murdoch, son of Executive Chairman Rupert Murdoch, may get a position at Disney if the deal is completed. It is also possible the younger Mr. Murdoch could strike out on his own. The Murdoch family controls a 39% voting interest in both 21st Century Fox and Wall Street Journal-parent News Corp. A Disney spokeswoman didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Comcast may choose to take no further action. One key development that could influence its thinking is Fox's release of a proxy statement on the merger, which would likely indicate the general process that led up to sealing a deal. It is unclear when Fox will file its proxy with regulators, ahead of a shareholder vote on the deal. Though such documents don't generally use specific company names, they can reveal how many bidders were serious contenders. Comcast will be looking for whether the proxy is clear that its bid was far higher than Disney's, and for signs that it was considered seriously, some of the people familiar with the situation said.

Another key factor is the AT&T-Time Warner case, as earlier reported by CNBC. If the deal survives the government's challenge, Comcast would be emboldened because it would believe Fox's argument of antitrust risk in a Comcast-Fox deal would be weakened, those people said. Comcast might be prepared to offer protections to Fox such as agreeing to remove certain assets from the deal that prove controversial in Washington, including regional sports channels, one of the people familiar with the situation said. It is also possible that instead of re-engaging in pursuit of all of the Fox assets, Comcast could zero in on something in particular, such as European pay TV giant Sky, some of the people said. Fox's attempt to purchase the remaining 61% of Sky it doesn't own has [**run into turbulence**](#) in the U.K.

Comcast, like Disney, believes Fox's assets could help it bulk up in content production, get more exposure to growing international assets like Fox's Star India, and allow it to increase its stake in online video service Hulu, which is co-owned by Comcast, Disney and Fox. Consolidation in the cable and media industries has pressured companies to explore big transactions. There are a range of factors that can influence a company's decision to turn down a higher purchase offer. In stock deals, the future value of the buyer's stock is an issue, as is the control powerful constituents would have. Comcast has a dual-class share structure that gives Chief Executive Brian Roberts one-third of the shares' combined voting power, while Disney has only one class of shares. The Murdoch family would be influential shareholders at Disney. – *Wall Street Journal*

If YouTube was looking for a little love from British lawmakers for its new initiative to label videos from news outlets that receive state funds, the company was in for a surprise. The lawmakers, who came to Washington this week to hold a [**hearing into fake news**](#), were even more scathing than [**U.S. critics of YouTube's idea**](#) for helping audiences understand where their news comes from.

Conservative Party lawmaker Damian Collins, chairman of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sports Committee in the House of Commons, said YouTube's proposal risked roping in public, independent broadcasters, such as the BBC, alongside state-backed propaganda outlets, such as Russia's RT. "By mixing up RT and the BBC together, do you think that is making things easier for consumers to navigate or muddying the waters?" Collins asked.

YouTube's global head of public policy, Juniper Downs, said that the company had developed its plan to use two different labels — one for news outlets that receive government funding, and

another for public broadcasters — after consulting media outlets, including the BBC. The feedback from the outlets is what led YouTube to use two distinct labels, she said.

The labels, which will appear underneath YouTube videos, will also include a link to the Wikipedia pages of the outlets. But Collins doubted that users would bother to click through. “There is a degree of confusion here,” he said. “It’s not just about the ownership structure or model of the organization, but the way it’s run and the degree of editorial independence it has, which exists at the BBC and doesn’t exist at RT.”

The British lawmakers were in the United States to collect evidence in a **broad inquiry** into the effects of fake news and misinformation on British elections and society. But unlike typical congressional hearings featuring tech execs, the British visitors were blunt and largely antagonistic, discarding the reverence that U.S. politicians usually display towards titans of industry. The members of Parliament grilled the policy chiefs of Google, Facebook and Twitter for not doing enough to curb false news on their platforms and questioned their commitment to democratic values even as their operations generate staggering revenue and claim global reach.

Collins suggested YouTube reconsider its label plan. “This may unwittingly sow more confusion rather than adding the transparency you have asked for,” he said. The U.S. public broadcaster PBS has also argued that YouTube’s decision is misguided. “Labeling PBS a ‘publicly funded broadcaster’ is both vague and misleading,” a spokesman told The Washington Post in a statement last week, when the labels were announced. “YouTube’s proposed labeling could wrongly imply that the government has influence over PBS content, which is prohibited by statute. If YouTube’s intent is to create clarity and better understanding, this is a step in the wrong direction.”

U.S. users will be the first to see the state-funded-media labels pinned to YouTube videos. And Downs said the company plans to expand the initiative, which follows efforts to surface more content from authoritative news sources on the popular video service. The labels will be displayed in YouTube search results, and they will not affect any video features or change the criteria for enabling advertisements on videos, the company said. — **Washington Post**

