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Service Electric Cable TV Inc. has selected TiVo Corp. for its new home entertainment platform, which the cable provider will begin rolling out to customers this fall. Service Electric, headquartered in Bethlehem and one of the Lehigh Valley's primary cable providers, informed employees of the switch on Thursday and said it would announce the new TiVo-powered box at [Musikfest](#), which will include working demonstrations of the new platform in its booth.

Service Electric will begin testing the new equipment with employees in early September before making it available to all customers early this fall. "TiVo's next-generation solution offers an advanced, graphically-rich and personalized user experience that our customers will love and enjoy both at home and on the go," Service Electric President John M. Walson said in a news release. "Service Electric remains committed to the advancement of innovation, and we're thrilled to be bringing our customers the very best in entertainment."

For customers, the cost for the TiVo-powered box will be the same as the current SE Next Whole Home DVR system, said Jack Capparell, general manager of Service Electric. Subscribers can keep their current box — and their saved DVR content — if they want, but they will have the option to switch to the TiVo platform for no additional cost, Capparell noted. New Service Electric customers will get the TiVo box.

The move to TiVo has been several months in the making, Capparell said, as Service Electric searched for a platform that would allow subscribers to access and navigate an increasing supply of content from a single screen. The TiVo Gateway DVR solution will allow Service Electric customers to search across pay TV, video on-demand offerings and over-the-top content, such as Netflix, YouTube and other apps, from one screen, the news release says. With TiVo, Service Electric customers also will be able to watch their DVR recordings from their smartphone or tablet, according to the release.

In addition, the new platform will be voice-activated, Capparell noted. "It will be a better experience for the customer," he said. Other Lehigh Valley cable providers, including Blue Ridge Communications, already use equipment powered by TiVo. Service Electric customers will be provided with more information about the new offering shortly, which also will be posted on [Service Electric's website](#). —  
*Allentown Morning Call*

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The Senate has approved two Republicans nominated by President Donald Trump to serve on the federal commission that oversees the nation's power grid and natural gas pipelines.

Senators' unanimous votes Thursday approving Senate aide Neil Chatterjee and Pennsylvania utility regulator **Robert Powelson** restore a voting quorum on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Only one commissioner currently serves on the panel, leaving it without a quorum and unable to make decisions on interstate pipelines and other projects worth billions of dollars.

Trump has promised to boost energy production and exports as part of a bid to establish "energy dominance" for the United States, but the FERC vacancies have hobbled the agency's ability to make decisions. More than a dozen major projects and utility mergers have been in regulatory limbo for months. The projects include the \$2 billion Nexus pipeline in Ohio and Michigan; the \$1 billion PennEast pipeline in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; and the \$5 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline in West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina.

Don Santa, president and CEO of the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, hailed the Senate votes, which business groups and lawmakers have been urging for months. FERC has been without a quorum since February. "The commission now can get back to work thoroughly reviewing the many energy infrastructure projects of national importance that have been sidelined in recent months," Santa said.

He and other business leaders said they also were encouraged that Trump has formally nominated Republican Kevin McIntyre to be FERC chairman and Democrat Richard Glick to round out the five-member panel. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has scheduled a hearing on the two nominees in September. Karen Harbert, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute, said Chatterjee and Powelson are "exceptionally well-qualified and will serve with distinction."

While overdue, the Senate's action "will now allow American energy companies the ability to move

forward with projects that will create jobs and improve our security," Harbert said. Chatterjee, of Kentucky, is an energy adviser to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., while Powelson serves on the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and is president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners.

The Southern Environmental Law Center, an advocacy group that opposes the massive Atlantic Coast pipeline, urged the new commissioners to use caution in reviewing the three-state pipeline and other projects. "The Trump administration's lack of organization has caused a backlog of projects waiting for FERC review, but the American people should not have to pay for this mismanagement with hastily approved pipelines," said Greg Buppert, a lawyer for the group. He urged commissioners to grant the law center's request for a hearing on whether the pipeline is needed. — **Associated Press**

Federal regulators took steps Thursday to close the digital divide in rural America, moving to reshape two subsidy programs that they say haven't been as effective as needed.

Expanding access to broadband in hard-to-serve areas across the U.S. has **proved a challenge for years**, not only because of costs, but also because of the rapidly changing technology itself. Lawmakers praised the Federal Communications Commission's move but noted that regulatory action can only go so far given that big new investments would still have to be authorized by Congress to bridge the divide. Some are expecting the Trump administration to include broadband expansion in a detailed infrastructure proposal in early September. Efforts to move an infrastructure bill through Congress have stalled so far this year.

Making progress in closing the digital divide has been a priority for many policy makers this year, including FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, who grew up in rural Kansas and frequently travels to small towns to highlight the problem. Making progress in closing the digital divide has been a priority for many policy makers this year, including FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, who grew up in rural Kansas and frequently travels to small towns to highlight the problem.

At Thursday's FCC meeting, Mr. Pai described how a minigolf course in rural Hopkinsville, Ky. has become a gathering place for people hoping to send emails or make phone calls. Similar problems are faced by "millions of rural Americans whose phones too often can't give them high-speed internet access," Mr. Pai said. At Mr. Pai's urging, the FCC on Thursday took steps to boost incentives for carriers to expand broadband service. The FCC voted to overhaul one of its existing programs for extending wireless broadband, with the aim of better targeting the funds. The Mobility Fund program will distribute about \$4.5 billion over the coming decade.

The FCC also sought to help increase broadband availability by moving forward with redesigning another existing subsidy program, the Connect America fund, which will distribute about \$2 billion over a decade. The agency also voted to begin exploring the idea of expanding wireless carriers' obligations to expand broadband access as part of their licensing agreements, and it voted to consider more ways of using airwaves for new communications technologies that could help expand access.

The Mobility Fund's troubles have been typical of the government's struggles to assist with expansion of broadband technology in rural America, which often lags behind urban and suburban areas. The Mobility Fund program had been criticized for wasting resources, in part because it has been hard to define which areas currently receive adequate service. As much as \$300 million of the \$500 million annual Mobility Fund expenditures has been spent on areas where a carrier claims to be providing unsubsidized service already, the FCC has estimated recently.

But officials say the maps, which have been based on providers' claims, often have overstated service levels. "In a nutshell, the mapping has been horrible," said Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat who has pushed legislation to improve the FCC's data collection and mapping. Providers "say they're covering areas that they weren't."

The plan adopted by the FCC on Thursday relies on a challenge process for areas where service levels are in doubt. A local government or another carrier could challenge a determination that an area is already adequately served and thus is ineligible for a subsidy. Sen. Roger Wicker (R., Miss.) said he expected the Trump administration to address the digital divide in rural areas in its long-awaited infrastructure proposal. "We're going to have to go beyond what is happening under current law and current available funds," said Mr. Wicker, who chairs a Senate subcommittee on communications and technology.

Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R., Tenn.), chairwoman of the communications and technology subcommittee, added that details such as accurate mapping data would be important to the effort, "so that hardworking taxpayer dollars target areas most in need of service—namely unserved areas." The broadband piece has been further clouded by the rapid pace of technological change, which complicates the question of how to invest scarce federal dollars.

The FCC estimates that in urban areas, 97% of Americans have access to high-speed fixed service. But in rural areas it is 65%, and 60% on tribal lands. Wireless broadband availability and smartphone usage in rural areas also have lagged behind that in cities and suburbs. Adoption rates also have been a problem, particularly in rural America. Cost of service is a big reason. — *Wall Street Journal*

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**Ben Waxman's** quest to knock off **State Rep. Brian Sims** in the 182nd District got a boost in April from former State Rep. Babette Josephs, who served 28 years in the seat before Sims knocked her off in 2012.

Bring Babette Back, the political action committee Josephs started in an **unsuccessful attempt** to retake the seat from Sims in 2014, donated its last \$9,430 to Waxman on April 25, according to a report filed with the state, terminating the PAC. Waxman challenged Sims in the 2016 Democratic primary election, taking 34 percent of the vote in a four-way primary, while Sims took 40 percent, **in the district**, which stretches from Spring Garden to South Philly. Waxman, who served as spokesman for Krasner's campaign in the primary, sent staffers there an email Tuesday, announcing that he would no longer hold that role. "I will be stepping back from the DA race to pursue other political efforts ... a bit closer to home. :-)" Waxman wrote.

Sims apparently took notice. He posted on Facebook on Wednesday a picture of the once and future challenger, posing with Eric Trump, second son of the president, after a campaign event in Harrisburg in October. Waxman, an avowed liberal, has a history of trying to get pictures with conservative politicians for giggles. Make of that what you will. Sims certainly did.

Sims captioned his Facebook post: "Challenge: One of these people is now running against me, the other is his 'good friend.' Guess who! (Hint: It's not Eric Trump.)" Sims linked the post to his fund-raising website. More than 100 people then commented on the photo, essentially splitting into two camps. Camp A: "Oh that's terrible. Here is my money." Camp B: "Waxman was joking. Sims should be ashamed." The Democratic primary election is more than nine months from now. Should be a bumpy ride from here to there. — *Philadelphia Daily News*

