

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MEETING

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MONDAY  
APRIL 27, 2020

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The Advisory Committee met via teleconference at 10:30 a.m., Steve Pociask, Chairman, presiding.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

STEVE POCIASK, Committee Chairman

DEBRA R. BERLYN, National Consumers League; Vice  
Chairman

ZAINAB ALKEBSI, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer  
Advocacy Network

WILLIAM BENDETSON, Massachusetts Department of  
Telecommunications & Cable

SAM BRINTON, The Trevor Project

JOSLYN DAY, Massachusetts Department of  
Telecommunications & Cable

MARK DEFALCO, Appalachian Regional Commission

B. LYNN FOLLANSBEE, USTelecom

SUSAN GRANT, Consumer Federation of America

KYLE J. HILDEBRAND, serving individually as a  
subject-matter expert, Special Government  
Employee

BRIAN HURLEY, America=s Communications  
Association - ACA Connects

THADDEUS JOHNSON, National Association of State  
Utility Consumer Advocates

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DAWIT KAHSAI, AARP  
JOHNNY KAMPIS, serving individually as a  
subject-matter expert, Special Government  
Employee  
ERIC KOCH, serving individually as a  
subject-matter expert, Special Government  
Employee  
IRENE LEECH, Consumer Federation of America  
SARAH LEGGIN, CTIA  
VONDA LONG-DILLARD, AT&T  
KATIE MCAULIFFE, Americans for Tax Reform  
STEVEN MORRIS, NCTA - The Internet and Television  
Association  
RACHEL NEMETH, Consumer Technology Association  
MICHAEL SANTORELLI, serving individually as a  
subject-matter expert, Special Government  
Employee  
BARRY UMANSKY, Digital Policy Institute  
LINDA VANDELOOP, AT&T  
LARRY WALKE, National Association of Broadcasters  
OLIVIA WEIN, National Consumer Law Center  
BOHDAN ZACHARY, Milwaukee PBS

COMMISSION STAFF:

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GREGORY V. HALEDJIAN, Deputy Designated Federal  
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CHARLES EBERLE  
BARBARA ESBIN  
GABRIELA GROSS  
CATHERINE LANGSTON  
CHARLES MATHIAS  
C. SEAN SPIVEY  
MARK STONE  
PATRICK WEBRE

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

10:31 a.m.

CHAIR POCIASK: Let's start the meeting.

Today's our Spring 2020 Federal Communications Commission's Consumer Advisory Meeting. I want to thank you all, the members, alternates, staff and public for joining the meeting today. I'm Steve Pociask. I'll be chairing and hosting the event. I hope everyone's healthy and doing well, and keeping safe during these unprecedented times.

I'd like to call the meeting to order.

We have a tight schedule today, but before we begin the agenda, I'd like to start by taking roll. What I'll do is I'll call each member, and so just unmute for a second and let me know you're available, and then you can mute your phone again. At that time, if you're an alternate, then please identify yourself so I can write all this down, and we'll move on to the next group.

So remember to mute and unmute. Right now everyone should be muted. Keep the conference call speaker-phones off. Are we ready to go?

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There's a little bit of an echo. Let me begin with the agenda here. The Vice Chair, Debra Berlyn, are you here?

MEMBER BERLYN: I'm here, yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Great. And from AARP, Dawit, you here?

MEMBER KAHSAI: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Brian Hurley?

MEMBER HURLEY: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Jonathan Hauenschild? Anyone else from American Legislative Exchange? How about Americans for Tax Reform? Katie, are you there? Appalachian Regional Commission? Mark, I saw you on.

MEMBER DEFALCO: Yes, present and accounted for.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. Vonda Long-Dillard, are you there?

MEMBER LONG-DILLARD: Present. Good morning, all.

CHAIR POCIASK: Shirley Rooker? Call for Action, Shirley? Okay. And how about Irene

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Leech?

MEMBER LEECH: Present.

CHAIR POCIASK: Good. Consumer  
Technology Association, Rachel?

MEMBER NEMETH: Yes, Rachel's here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. Consumer  
Reports, Jonathan, are you there? Jonathan?  
CTIA? Matthew Gerst?

MEMBER LEGGIN: Sarah Leggin's here,  
CTIA.

CHAIR POCIASK: So you're here for  
Matthew?

MEMBER LEGGIN: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Great, thank you.  
Zainab?

MEMBER ALKEBSI: Yes, I'm on the line.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. Barry  
Umansky?

MEMBER UMANSKY: Yes, Steve, I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. Eric Koch?  
Eric, are you on?

MEMBER KOCH: Yes, I'm here.

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CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. And then Johnny Kampis?

MEMBER KAMPIS: Yes, sir.

CHAIR POCIASK: Kyle Hildebrand?

MEMBER HILDEBRAND: Present, Steve.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. Joslyn, I heard you on. Are you still there?

MEMBER DAY: I am still here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Wonderful. And Michael Santorelli?

MEMBER SANTORELLI: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Bohdan Zachary?

MEMBER ZACHARY: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Larry Walke?

MEMBER WALKE: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thaddeus Johnson?

MEMBER JOHNSON: Present.

CHAIR POCIASK: Olivia Wein?

MEMBER WEIN: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Steven Morris?

MEMBER MORRIS: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: Sam Brinton?

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MEMBER BRINTON: I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: And Lynn Follansbee?

MEMBER FOLLANSBEE: Hi, I'm here.

CHAIR POCIASK: So we have quorum.

MEMBER GRANT: Hi, this is Susan Grant.

I'm also here, the alternate from CFA.

CHAIR POCIASK: Good, let me pencil that in.

MEMBER GRANT: Thank you.

CHAIR POCIASK: Any other alternates?

MEMBER BENDETSON: This is William Bendetson. I'm here with Joslyn from Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable.

CHAIR POCIASK: Well good morning.

MEMBER BENDETSON: Good morning.

CHAIR POCIASK: All right. So everyone has their mute back off, so let's begin. Just a couple quick housekeeping items to start. As Friday's email instructed, if possible you can electronically raise your hand if you're on the WebEx, but please be a little patient with me since

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I need to notice your signal and find time to break for the question and put others in queue, and with you individually. On occasion I'll be checking the chat box, looking for text messages on my phone.

So just remember if you do have a question later, remember to identify yourself before speaking. Also, please remember to turn off your raised hand after you ask your question.

So with that, let's start the agenda. To start off today, I'd like to introduce Patrick Webre, the Chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. Patrick will give us an overview of today's presentation. So Patrick?

MR. WEBRE: Good morning, Steve, and good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Spring 2020 Consumer Advisory Committee Meeting. As folks may know, this is our first ever virtual meeting of the CAC. All of us here at the Commission wish we could be with you in person today, but of course we're doing what we must in order to safeguard everyone's health. We hope that you and your family stay safe and well during

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this global pandemic.

Most of the FCC staff, like most of you, have been teleworking since mid-March. Nevertheless, like you, we've adjusted our professional and personal lives in order to continue serving the American people. The Commission has responded to this unprecedented disruption to the nation's economic, educational and civic life by acting in various ways to ensure that Americans stay connected.

This morning's agenda includes presentations from a few different bureaus within the Agency regarding their latest (audio interference). We'll hear from Justin Cain from Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, and Charles Mathias and Sean Spivey from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau. They will discuss the Commission's efforts to support the incredible work of our nation's first responders and public safety community, as well as the unseen, but absolutely vital contributions of our wireless telecommunications and Internet service

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providers.

If folks who are not speaking keep your phones on mute, that will allow us to proceed without an echo. So you will also hear from Adam Copeland, Gabriela Gross and Chas Eberle from the Wireline Competition Bureau on how the Agency is expediting support for the broadband connections needed for telehealth, and the steps it has taken to support distance learning efforts. This work is more critical than ever, as so many Americans must stay home in order to flatten the curve, in accordance with CDC guidance.

Throughout the Agency, we're looking closely at all interested stakeholder communities to ensure that Americans are connected and stay connected during these challenging times. We're also excited about the great response to Chairman Pai's Keep Americans Connected initiative from communications companies across the nation. More than 700 providers of wireless and wireline phone and broadband services have pledged that for the next 60 days, they will not terminate service to

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any residential or small business customers who are unable to pay their bills due to disruptions caused by the pandemic, and will waive late fees for such customers.

These companies have also committed to open their WiFi hotspots to any American who needs them. Many companies are going further, responding to Chairman Pociask's challenge to go above and beyond the pledge, and are expanding broadband programs for low-income consumers, relaxing data usage limits in appropriate circumstances at no additional cost, and taking steps to advance remote learning and telehealth.

As is our custom, a little later in today's program, my senior colleagues in CBG will provide updates regarding their specific areas of responsibility.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank you, the CAC members, for your valuable work with the CAC, including the time you spend on its various working groups. I also appreciate you staying with us on this conference bridge for

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two hours today. As a teleworker myself these days, I know a long conference call can be a challenge. I also want to thank you for your work on our truth in billing efforts. We look forward to receiving your recommendations. Thanks again for being with us today. I'll now hand off our next segment of our agenda. I'll either take it back to Steve or straight over to Justin Cain of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau.

Thank you.

CHAIR POCIASK: Just one thing here. Justin will start us off. Again, this will be a discussion on the network performance during COVID-19 crisis. Justin is with the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. Then we have two other speakers. We have Charles Mathias. He's the Associate Chief with the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, and Sean Spivey, Legal and Policy Advisor with the Office of the Bureau Chief at the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau.

So we'll hit them sequentially, and then we'll go for questions. Justin, would you like to start

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us off?

MR. CAIN: Yeah, great. Thank you, Steve, I appreciate it. Thanks, Patrick, for the lead-in. I think you took care of all of my difficult work, so I can just speak to the operational aspects. Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm just going to cover what the FCC, and specifically, what Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau are doing in response to COVID-19. A lot of folks don't think of the FCC as playing a large role in pandemic response, but when it comes to emergency communications, naturally we have a very important role to play there.

So I just want to give some background.

Actually, the FCC purpose as determined in 47 United States Code \_ 151 is to make available to all the people of the U.S. a rapid and efficient nationwide, worldwide wire and radio communications service for the purpose of national defense and the safety of life and property. I think we can all agree that the impacts of COVID-19

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definitely pose some significant risk to our public safety. So it's important that we ensure, as more and more of you as residents begin to telework from home, or are spending more time with family members, or just trying to stay online to maintain that semblance of sanity as we're trying to work through this crisis, that they have unfettered access to the communications that they need.

This is especially important, being a father myself, having three children, all of whom require that access to maintain their school studies during this crisis since they're not able to go into the classroom, it's important that we can ensure the availability and the resilience of communications during this entire issue. We participate in the whole of government response as outlined in the National Response Framework, within the Emergency Support Function #2 communications annex of the NRF, the National Response Framework, the Federal Communications Commission is specifically designated as a participant.

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What we've done to kind of deal with this COVID-19 is, our concern was whether or not these networks would be able to hold up as more and more people began working and staying at home.

I think in order to get a ground truth, we reached out to industry automatically. We've been doing that since March 3rd, and we meet with them on a weekly basis to get updates as far as their network performance is concerned. Naturally, we have our own mechanisms in-house to determine the status of communications networks nationwide, but we also like to get it from the horse's mouth, so to speak, how they're managing their networks, what mitigative techniques or protocols they have in place in case something does happen, and also to respond to any challenges that industry may have with regards to getting their own resources out front, using available spectrum, getting the personal protective equipment that they need in order to get technicians and engineers out on the road.

So as you can see on the slide, we

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reached out to a number of carriers just to get a general overview of what's taking place. I think thus far, I've been pretty impressed with the way industry is managing. Naturally there were some minor issues, but having walked through these issues with industry and seeing the actions that they've taken, whether they're deploying mobile resources to kind of offset that bandwidth and rededicate resources to network communications to ensure that availability and ensure that optimal performance, or something as simple as requesting a special temporary authority. You'll hear about these special temporary authorities later on in the presentation from one of my colleagues, to go ahead and be able to transit on to available spectrums so we can continue to broaden the bandwidth so they can continue to provide those optimal resources.

Next slide. So as you can see, industry was very responsive from the outset. They all activated their business continuity plans, because they're as much victims of this

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pandemic as we are. Right? So they're still required to provide for these services. What they did is they've gone ahead and they took the appropriate measures to make sure that their own personnel and employees are safe. They're each members of the Communications Information Sharing and Analysis Center, the Communications ISAC, and then they also convene a special COVID-19 working group every week to discuss with Department of Homeland Security the actions that they're taking to ensure the continuity and availability of communication.

Originally, again, industry was just as concerned that congestion could have been an issue, but the actions that they've taken to ensure that their employees could remotely access their network management systems, and again, having those contingency protocols in place to go ahead and deploy in case they needed to, whether it was to offset or reinforce network performance, they went ahead and took those actions ahead of time before they started seeing the massive numbers of

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businesses begin to telework or go offline.

Next slide, please. I'm sorry, we'll move to the next slide. Some of the concerns that we've received from industry is initial problems with access. Naturally, every state being its own sovereignty, is responding to COVID-19 in a different way. Each state and locale considers different critical infrastructure businesses as essential. So really distributing that message more broadly and ensuring that all state locales were on the same page, that the communications industry, while not technically perceived as a healthcare organization, is still responsible for ensuring the promulgation of healthcare communications.

With that, we've got those other communities within communications users that require specialized communications needs that we typically don't take into consideration. First and foremost, when you're looking at the disabilities community, who require things like telecommunications and video relay services or

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closed-captioning, a lot of those companies or businesses were not considered when they were being classified as essential critical infrastructure businesses.

So we really had to get the message out there, and I think we worked very closely with the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to provide input to their guidance on essential critical infrastructure workforce, but also to perform outreach to our state and local partners, just to raise awareness of some of the issues that we've had. Next slide, please.

You can see, as Patrick already talked about, the Chairman's Keeping Americans Connected Pledge has been huge. The fact that we were able to get over 700 providers to agree to those three tenets, to ensure that people have the services that they need when they need them, is critical to public safety. Naturally, we're thinking of things like being able to call 9-1-1 in emergency situations, being able to get emergency alerts when

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necessary. Emergency alerts have been critical in letting the public know state and local lockdown procedures or quarantine procedures.

With that, we've gone ahead and issued those special temporary authorities to allow those industry providers to go ahead and roll them on to different frequencies or on a different spectrum. We provided waivers of power rules so that if we needed broadcasters in a certain area to go ahead and increase the power so we could get the information out to the public, we've gone ahead and did that. The FCC took actions to increase funding for telehealth and the rural health care.

Next slide, please.

Essentially we're still in the middle of the grind. We still are on daily calls with the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. We're still performing weekly outreach to industry. As we move forward into the wildfire seasons and hurricane seasons, we're going to maintain that contact because we want to ensure that we're

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managing all of these events in a coordinated effort. As we begin to see changes in network performance, we want to make sure that there are techniques out there or protocols in place to go ahead and mitigate any potential disruptions or degradation of services.

You can go ahead and access a lot of the things that we're already doing to support COVID-19 response. I've listed the website here at [fcc.gov/coronavirus](https://fcc.gov/coronavirus). Unless there are any questions, that concludes my presentation.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you, Justin. Charles Mathias, would you like to go next?

MR. MATHIAS: Let me add my thanks and welcome to everybody. What I'd actually like to do is turn the floor over to my colleague, Sean, who can explain what a special temporary authority is, an STA. And then I will walk you through some of the types of STAs that we have been granting over the past month. So next slide, please.

MR. SPIVEY: Thanks, Charles, and let me also say thank you to the CAC for allowing us

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to present today. So this first slide here is just an explanation of what an STA or an Application for Special Temporary Authority is. An STA is an application for temporary or immediate use of spectrum. It's meant to be for short duration.

As a matter of fact, the Communications Act requires that it can only be for a period of 180 days. Its purpose is to basically allow for quick access to spectrum under certain conditions that are outlined in the Commission's rules.

As you can see on this slide, there are four sets of circumstances that we typically consider. One is emergency situations such as natural disasters. A second is to permit restoration or relocation of existing facilities to continue communications service. The third is for a temporary non-recurring service where a regular authorization, such as a license, is not appropriate. And then the fourth is a catch-all, and other situations involving circumstances which are of such extraordinary nature they delay in the initiation of temporary operation would seriously

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prejudice the public interest.

So in the context of COVID-19, the Commission has worked with industry to use applications for STAs to provide quick access to spectrum resources to expand broadband connectivity in a variety of circumstances, which we'll get into in the next two slides. These range from spectrum that was in FCC inventory and had not yet been licensed to spectrum that may be licensed to a particular entity, but hadn't been deployed entirely, to other sets of circumstances that we've also worked creatively with industry to take advantage of to expand connectivity during the pandemic.

So as we go to the next slide, I'll turn it back over to Charles, who can talk about some of these situations in more detail.

MR. MATHIAS: Thank you, Sean. So we've been busy. We've granted to date approximately 200 STAs. They're initially for a period of 60 days from the date of grant, and they can be renewed. The first STAs were from AT&T and also

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Verizon, who were interested in using AWS-3 spectrum that was in the Commission's inventory.

And what we did there was, they were potentially competing requests, so what we asked them to do was to get together and decide amongst them which areas of the country they wanted to cover per request.

And they came back to us with a list that divided up their priorities, and we were able to grant those without a problem. Another company that has been very active on STAs is T-Mobile. As some of you may know, T-Mobile is deploying a nationwide 600-megahertz network. While they have a lot of that spectrum, they do not have great depth of the spectrum in certain parts of the country. So they have been approaching us, and they are requesting permission to use 600-megahertz spectrum that is in our inventory.

And I should say that when I say it's in our inventory, it means that either it was not successfully auctioned in the auction process, or for one reason or another, it has been returned

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back to the Commission. So T-Mobile has been using lots of 600-megahertz spectrum to increase the capacity of their networks. And we have recently begun to receive requests for STAs for the use of different parts of the AWS spectrum, as well as certain gigahertz band spectrum, which is being used for some backhaul, including we have microwave, as well. The backhaul is being used, it might be of interest, it is being used in part to provide connectivity to some of these COVID field hospitals that are being set up around the country.

While it's true that a lot of the STA activity has been going to the three national carriers, we've seen requests from US Cellular, which is adding to its inventory, as well as rural carriers. In the case of rural carriers, we've seen instances where they're swapping spectrum.

They may have 600 and need 700, so they're doing a swap with T-Mobile for that. But we're allowing them to expand their capacity, as well. Then in an important additional area, we have been giving

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temporary authority to wireless Internet service providers to increase their capacity.

These are companies, as you all know, that are providing a lot of very valuable wireless service in areas where potentially there's no fixed service, no wireline service or potentially it's where the cell capacity isn't as good. We have been able to allow them 75 additional, maybe 80 WISPs have approached us, and we've been able to grant them a certain amount of relief in most markets. In certain instances, that hasn't been possible where there has been a competing existing license used, or the area has been excluded because of an existing federal user. With that, I'll turn it back to Sean, who can tell you a little bit more about what we've been doing in Indian country. Next slide, please.

MR. SPIVEY: Thanks, Charles. The last point we wanted to emphasize were STAs that the Commission has granted recently to expand broadband connectivity on tribal lands. As I'm sure folks on the Committee are aware, the digital

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divide is particularly acute on tribal lands. A couple of steps that we've done, the first STA that we granted was on March 30th and it was to the A'shiwi College and Career Readiness Center on behalf of the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico. And this was for unassigned 2.5 gigahertz spectrum. The center was actually established by the tribe in 2016, and it applied on behalf of the Zuni Pueblo to provide service over rural areas of their tribal lands.

And so the STA authorized use over rural tribal land that is eligible in our Rural Tribal Priority Filing Window, which is a separate initiative the Commission has started, which provides prioritized access to certain unassigned 2.5 gigahertz spectrum over rural tribal lands.

That window closes in August. The STA, again, it makes available the spectrum on a secondary, non-interference basis. There are a few conditions that were included as part of the STA.

Specifically the Center represented that it was

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ready to deploy on the spectrum immediately.

Since these are short, temporary authorizations, we wanted to make sure that the applicant was able to put the spectrum to use immediately. And then also because it was the Center applying and not the Zuni Pueblo itself, we made sure that the Center represented that it had obtained consent from the Zuni tribal leader.

We have similarly granted an STA for unassigned 2.5 gigahertz spectrum to the Navajo Nation. Again, that's on a secondary, non-interference basis, based on our understanding that the Nation was ready to deploy immediately.

And again, these STAs don't really prejudice or affect the rights of applicants who are rated for that Rural Tribal Priority Filing Window. We've also granted STAs in the lower 700-megahertz spectrum band to NTUA Wireless. NTUA Wireless applied to provide service to the Navajo Nation using that spectrum, and they actually obtained it from some of the spectrum that was licensed to T-Mobile. Other of it was licensed

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to AT&T, but they went and reached agreements to use that spectrum on a temporary basis. And so NTUA has STAs to use spectrum to expand access using that resource as well.

Finally wanted to note that, Charles talked a little bit about the 5.9-gigahertz fixed wireless Internet service provider STAs that we've granted. We granted one of those to Wind River Internet, which is a rural provider that serves the Northern Arapaho Tribe and the Eastern Shoshone Tribe on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

So we granted a 5.9-gigahertz STA to Wind River Internet on April 17th. Parties continue to apply for STAs, and we continue to process those quickly and consider those to continue to expand access where we can using all the spectrum resources that happen to be available.

So I think that concludes WTB's presentation. We can turn it back over to Steve to moderate any questions that we may have.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you. Let's see, we have Irene. You want to identify yourself and

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ask your question.

MEMBER LEECH: Hello. I'm Irene Leech, and I represent the Consumer Federation of America.

I see lots of great contacts out with the industry.

I'm curious what kinds of contacts you've made with the ultimate customers directly to find out how these things are working for people who are in some of these particularly underserved areas.

Thank you.

CHAIR POCIASK: Any of the speakers want to join into that?

MR. CAIN: I'm sorry, Irene. My cell phone broke up a little bit. Can you please repeat the question?

MEMBER LEECH: Have you made any contacts with the ultimate customers, the consumers who are living in some of these underserved areas, to see what their experiences have been, or have you taken the consumers' experience through the eyes of the provider?

MR. CAIN: So just from an operations perspective, and I can't speak for the FCC here

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because I know the Consumer Governmental Affairs Bureau is constantly in contact with the consumers, we tend to depend on social media. We do actually get some information, anecdotal information obviously, on issues that consumers are experiencing at the local level. Naturally we have to validate this information, and we do so using a lot of our more technical mechanisms, like the Network Outage Reporting System. Then we have a network reporting tracking system.

As far as getting consumer information, we both communicate with the state and local emergency management officials through our Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group representation, and then we will also leverage whether it's open-source information and any reported information through social media. Again, like I said, just validating that information through our technical capabilities. So that's kind of how we've been maintaining that status quo.

We have regional preparedness officers

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in the different FEMA regions, and I know we've relied heavily on the National Coordinating Center for Communications through the Department of Homeland Security, and they will also provide us some of their anecdotal information from consumers at the ground level.

CHAIR POCIASK: We're up on time here, so let's move on. We have three presenters dealing with promoting telehealth and distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis. First, we'll hear from Adam Copeland, he's Associate Chief with the Wireline Competition Bureau. Then after that, we'll have Gabriela Gross, who's the Deputy Chief at Telecommunications Access Policy Division of the Wireline Competition Bureau. Then Chas Eberle is Senior Counsel with Telecommunications Access Policy Division.

We'll talk about the Wireline Competition Bureau on this issue, and then we'll hit some questions. So let's do this. Let's start off with Adam. Can you begin the discussion please?

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MR. COPELAND: Sure. Good morning, everyone. Nice to be here with you. My name is Adam Copeland. I'm an Associate Bureau Chief in the Wireline Competition Bureau here at the FCC.

I am the person in the Wireline Competition Bureau's front office that oversees our rural healthcare program, which is part of the Universal Service Fund. Chas Eberle is going to talk about the specific COVID telehealth program, which you may have heard about. It was authorized by Congress recently in the CARES Act, which appropriates \$200 million for COVID telehealth-related things.

But the Commission has also been making changes to its Rural Health Care Program. It's a program which has been a part of the Universal Service Fund for quite a while in response to COVID-19. And I am going to talk about what the Commission has been doing on that front right now.

So we can go to the next slide. So there are three main things that the Commission has done. The first was back on March 13, 2020, the full

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Commission adopted an order that funds all program demand for funding year 2019, which if you're not familiar with Universal Service windows, or at least if you're not familiar with RHC windows, that's going to go through June 30th of this year.

So the funding years kind of split the calendar years in half.

So what that's going to mean is that all applications for funding year 2019 that pass muster under Rural Health Care rules will be fully funded. Before the Commission took this action, there was a chance that some of those applications would be funded on only a pro-rated basis, and that will no longer occur. They will be fully funded, and the Commission had to enact a couple of waivers to make that happen back in March, including allowing USAC to carry forward all unused funding from previous years. There's also a \$150 million cap on certain commitments in the Healthcare Connect Fund part of the Rural Health Care Program that had to be waived as well. The Commission waived both of those things to enable all funding

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year 2019 program demand to be funded.

Second thing the Commission did, the Wireline Competition Bureau on March 18, 2020, issued a waiver of both the Rural Health Care Program and the E-rate gift rules. Gabby is going to talk momentarily about what this means on the E-rate side. But on the Rural Health Care side, what this means is that Rural Health Care Program participants can solicit and accept equipment and/or services from communications providers to address pandemic-related needs.

So for instance, one example that we've already seen, to support telehealth in some facilities, Rural Health Care providers may need access to greater bandwidth than what they applied for for support in the program. So we've actually seen service providers, either on service providers' own initiative or at the healthcare providers' request, provide that upgraded bandwidth to Rural Health Care providers to enable them to better address the pandemic.

On the RHC side, this waiver also

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permits healthcare providers to forego payment or accept partial payment of the non-discount share of the RHC program-supported services. So what that means is that healthcare providers under the Healthcare Program rules are required to pay a portion of those costs, and then the rest are subsidized by the Universal Service Fund. This additional waiver, which the Wireline Competition Bureau adopted in March, actually allows service providers to pick up some of that cost or outright waive some of those costs for healthcare providers.

The idea being here that if communications providers want to and have the means to help Rural Health Care providers during this pandemic, there's that opportunity to do that. And then the third thing that the Commission did, the Wireline Competition Bureau adopted a fairly wide-ranging waiver order back on March 26, 2020.

Several waivers here, six in all actually. The idea behind these waivers was to assist Rural Health Care providers in maintaining their focus

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on actually responding to the pandemic rather than having to deal with administrative issues that are connected to the RHC program.

Some of the things that this waiver order did, it provided an extension of the filing window for the program, extending it from April 30th to June 30th. It provides an additional 28 days, for a total of 42, for healthcare providers to respond when they receive information requests from the Universal Service Administrative Company, or USAC. It extends by one year what's called the service delivery deadline for non-recurring services in funding year 2019. What that's going to mean is if there are delays that are related to the pandemic in actually basically turning on a service that is receiving support from the program, there is now time, an extra year, for that service to be turned so that program funding is not lost just because there is a delay.

Also provides Rural Health Care participants in the Healthcare Connect Fund program with 180-day extension of the invoice

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filing deadline. Again, it's a 180-day, six-month delay now in when invoices have to be submitted to USAC. And then also it provides an additional 60 days to file appeals and waivers with both the Commission and USAC. So again, giving healthcare providers some additional flexibility so they can hopefully keep their efforts trained on addressing the pandemic directly.

So that is the overview of what's going on in the Rural Health Care side of the house. I'll turn it over to Gabby to talk about what the Commission has done on E-rates.

MS. GROSS: Great. Thanks, Adam. I am Gabby Gross, and I am the Deputy Division Chief of the Schools and Libraries Program, otherwise known as the E-rate program, which is also part of the Commission's Universal Service Fund. Today I just wanted to briefly highlight some of the work that the Commission is doing to ensure students remain connected and continue their studies while they're at home during COVID-19, and specifically the actions that the Wireline Competition Bureau

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has taken to support schools and libraries that participate in the E-rate program during this time.

So first is, as mentioned earlier, last month the Chairman called on broadband and telephone service providers to take the Keep Americans Connected Pledge. Under that pledge, which has now been signed by more than 700 companies and associations, including all of the nation's largest service providers and many of the smallest providers, providers have agreed to not terminate service to consumers due to their inability to pay bills because of disruptions associated with the pandemic. They've waived late fees and opened up their WiFi hotspots to anyone that needs them.

As you also heard earlier, at the Chairman's urging, many of these providers have gone above and beyond the pledge, upgrading speeds at no charge for consumers, expanding low-cost programs, and offering free service to low-income families and students. Complementing these efforts, on the E-rate side of things, the Bureau has also issued guidance and waived a number of

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program rules that are designed to promote broadband connectivity and alleviate burdens for schools and libraries, much like the Bureau has done in the Rural Health Care context. And as part of those efforts, you heard Adam talk about the waiver of the gift rule, which the Bureau also waived in the context of the E-rate programs.

That waiver allows service providers that participate in E-rate programs to offer, and the schools and libraries that participate in the program to solicit and accept things like free broadband connections, devices, WiFi hotspots, and other services that support remote learning during the coronavirus outbreak, which would otherwise be prohibited under our rules. And that waiver is effective through September 30th of this year.

In addition, the Bureau has extended various programmatic deadlines, again in an effort to alleviate administrative and compliance burdens on schools so that they can focus on transitioning to remote learning. Last month, we waived the application filing window for funding year 2020

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and extended the deadline by 35 days to give E-rate program applicants more time to get their funding year 2020 funding requests in. And that window closes this week on the 29th.

We've also, recognizing that it may not be possible to get on school grounds to install equipment and services, and that there might be shortages and delays in obtaining certain equipment, have waived and extended the service implementation deadline for special construction to deploy fiber by one year for those applicants this deadline that would have been in 2020. Along those lines, we've extended several other deadlines, including our invoice filing deadline, the deadline to file appeals and waiver requests, as well as the response deadline for applicants to respond to certain information requests related to their appeals, invoices, audits, and information requests around their applications, again, to give them that flexibility and be able to focus more on getting their students connected at home.

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And then finally, also last month we issued a reminder to schools and libraries that are closed as a result of COVID-19 that they may allow the general public to use their E-rate supported WiFi network while on the school campus or on the library's property. So that's just some of the highlights of some of the work that the Commission and the Bureau has done to help support these remote learning efforts. And with that, I will pass it along to Chas.

MR. EBERLE: Good morning, everybody.

This is Chas Eberle with TAPD. I'm here to give a brief rundown of the Commission's COVID-19 telehealth program. As I will explain, this is a very new and rapidly developing program that has been launched in specific response to the pandemic, and is developing day by day at such a rapid pace that we actually declined to provide slides last week, lest they be out of date by the time I spoke today. So I will just sort of talk you through what the program is and what we're up to.

So in response to COVID-19, many

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healthcare providers across the country are expanding existing and implementing new telehealth services. And the demand for connected care, telehealth and other services that connect doctors to their patients at home, have skyrocketed. In the CARES Act, Congress appropriated \$200 million to the FCC to support effects of healthcare providers, to address the coronavirus by providing telecommunication services, information services and devices necessary to enable the provision of telehealth.

On April 2nd, the FCC established the COVID-19 Telehealth Program to fund eligible healthcare providers dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The next thing we'd like to discuss is how healthcare providers can apply for and receive funding from the program. First and foremost, providers need to be eligible. Eligible providers for the program are public and non-profit healthcare providers as defined in the Telecommunications Act. These include post-secondary educational institutions offering

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healthcare instruction, teaching hospitals and medical schools, community health centers or health centers providing healthcare to migrants, local health departments or agencies, community mental health centers, not-for-profit hospitals, rural health clinics, skilled nursing facilities, or consortia of healthcare providers consisting of one more entities falling into those first seven categories.

I would emphasize for consumer advocates and others on the phone that may be working with healthcare providers to review the eligibility list and make sure than any entity interested in seeking funds is, in fact, eligible for support. How to apply? We have set up an online web portal that is active as of late last week, at [fcc.gov/COVID-19-telehealth-program](http://fcc.gov/COVID-19-telehealth-program). If you weren't able to get that down quickly, if you Google FCC telehealth, FCC COVID telehealth, we pop right up.

Commission staff are reviewing applications on a rolling basis, and funding will

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remain available until either the \$200 million fund is exhausted or the pandemic has ended. Funding is targeted towards areas that have been hardest hit by COVID-19, and where support will have the most impact on addressing healthcare needs. The Commission at this time does not anticipate making any individual award in excess of \$1 million to a single applicant, so all awards to date have been below \$1 million, and we anticipate that being the case going forward.

Selected applicants will receive payments based on invoices submitted for the supported services and connected devices they are purchasing with program funding. So that's sort of the basic outlines of the program that Commission staff has done remarkable work standing up in just a few weeks. So quickly, in fact, that we've already done three rounds of awards. As of April 24th, Friday, the program has funded 17 healthcare providers in 10 states and issued a total of \$9.5 million in funding commitments.

We anticipate as our staff reviewers

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get up to snuff and start being able to work through all applications that have been submitted, and applications continue to come in on a rolling basis, that our pace of commitments will increase in the coming weeks. Services and devices funded by the program to date include remote patient monitoring for high-risk patients to reduce hospital visits, equipment to employ telehealth in operating rooms and conference rooms that have been converted into ICUs due to the pandemic, and support for telehealth for children who have received organ transplants and are thus immunocompromised.

So that is a brief high-level rundown of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. I'd encourage anyone interested to visit the website and learn more. And Commission staff are always available to answer questions. And with that, I'll turn it over. Thank you all.

CHAIR POCIASK: Well thank you, Chas, and also thank Gabby and Adam. We have a question here from Susan Grant of the Consumer Federation

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of America.

MEMBER GRANT: Hi. Thank you.

In regards to the gift waiver program, I was wondering when the waivers end, the entities who have been using them, will they be at all billed for those services going forward that (audio interference) or will services just end and if they want to continue that, they'll have to (audio interference).

I'm really sorry about this, I have no idea what (audio interference). But I did have another question, and that is if you're thinking about all of the things FCC is doing, it has (audio interference) need that there is out there for better broadband services, and is there any thought about what will happen after the pandemic is over in terms of (audio interference) kinds of benefits to the public. Thank you.

MR. COPELAND: Okay. I think everyone should mute their phone. We're getting a really bad echo.

So, if you could just -- if you could

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check that your phone is muted and off of speaker phone, okay. I think that went away.

I'm going to -- this is Adam Copeland.

I'm going to do my best to answer the parts of the question that I could make out.

I believe the first part of the question is, what happens to services or equipment that is acquired during the waiver period before September 30th, when September 30th happens and the waiver expires?

So, I think for -- you know, the example I used was extended bandwidth capability. That would be something that if the healthcare provider wanted to keep that capability, they would either need to start paying full price, not part of -- and because the gift rules would go back into effect, or they would have the option of seeking a waiver specifically for those services from the Commission, but it does not automatically extend.

There is a possibility, depending on how things progress, that the Commission could extend the waivers generally beyond September 30th

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for either RHC or E-rate.

But as of now, without that type of extension, they would either have to start paying, stop getting the service, or file a waiver request for it.

I think the second part of the question is, what other initiatives is the Commission planning on if the pandemic does not end as quickly as we hope?

I think that this is a, you know, constantly evolving situation, as you've heard from many public officials. The Commission is looking at its rules very regularly and will continue to do so.

So, if this extends beyond, you know, the fall time frame or when some of these actions start to expire, the Commission is not just going to, you know, let these things expire and do nothing else.

I mean, this agency has tried to really take a strong initiative to address and combat the pandemic and provide the help that it can to

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entities that are regulated.

So, you know, the Agency will keep looking at each of its programs to see how it can assist in addressing the pandemic, regardless of how long the pandemic lasts.

CHAIR POCIASK: Alright. Debbie Berlyn, you have a quick question?

MEMBER BERLYN: Yes, I do. Hold on one second. Yes. I'm taking it off of -- yes. Thank you. And thank you for the presentation.

And I think one thing that's helpful is if folks, if they do speak, that they take it off of speaker phone. So, hopefully that reduces the echo.

But on this topic, thank you for the presentation. And I was interested and pleased to hear that it also covers mental health providers, which I think is very good that it includes that.

So I wondered, with the support that the FCC is providing, I would assume that there is also federal funding perhaps for telehealth from

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other agencies.

And I was wondering about that so that perhaps health providers can bundle some federal funding support together.

So, I was wondering if you have information about that.

MR. EBERLE: Yeah. This is Chas.

I can't speak to specific programs from other agencies. I can tell you that I and others in WCB have been coordinating with staff from FEMA, HHS, CDC, on broader telehealth responses.

I know that FEMA and HHS, in particular, have a running Telehealth Working Group that serves mainly to advise healthcare providers and state and local agencies on best practices, increasing the use of telehealth and providing sort of logistical advice where appropriate.

In terms of actual funding streams, I'm not, off the top of my head, aware of any other telehealth-specific federal grant or federal reimbursement programs other than the one we're administering, but I can look into that further.

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But in my work on this to date, I have not come across any other, you know, direct application to get funding streams for these type of services.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. We're kind of running late on time, but -- so, we'll just -- let us move on.

MEMBER BERLYN: Can I have one -- Steve, one other quick question.

Could they repeat the website where the information about this is on the website?

MR. EBERLE: Sure. It's [fcc.gov/COVID-19-telehealth-program](http://fcc.gov/COVID-19-telehealth-program). And if any part of that isn't typed correctly, you can just Google FCC COVID, FCC Telehealth.

MEMBER BERLYN: Thank you.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. So, next we have the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau giving an update with the focus on the response for the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, starting us off we'll have -- well,

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we'll have four speakers in total. So we'll start with Mark Stone, and then Barbara Esbin and then Diane Burstein, and then finally Ed Bartholme.

So starting off, then, we'll go with Mark, the deputy chief at Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau.

Remember too, everyone, as you put up your hand, remember to take your hand down after you have your question answered.

Hey, Mark. Ready to start us off?

MR. STONE: Sure. Good morning, all of you, and thanks for your participation and hard work in all that you all do.

You've heard this morning from what other bureaus have been doing to help consumers during the pandemic and, as Steve mentioned, you know, how CGB will describe its work.

As usual, I wanted to discuss our work on robocalls. Normally we talk about how we're trying to stop illegal robocalls, and that's certainly been a big part of our work over the last couple of weeks, but we and CGB have also focused

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on the types of robocalls we don't want consumers to get during the pandemic.

So on March 20th the Bureau, CGB, released an order to enable healthcare providers and others to get critical robocalls and texts related to the pandemic to consumers.

Specifically, CGB, on its own motion, released an order interpreting the TCPA's emergency purposes exemption from the prior express consent requirement for calls and texts related to the pandemic.

Now, the Commission's rules define emergency purposes to mean calls made necessary in any situation affecting the health and safety of consumers.

In that March 20th order, the Bureau said that certain calls and texts fit within that emergency purposes exception.

As part of its analysis it sort of looked at two aspects of the call, the caller and the call content.

So to qualify for the exemption, the

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caller must be a hospital, healthcare provider, state or local health official or other government official or (audio interference) of such an organization and acting on its behalf.

Moving to the call content, the content must be solely informational, made necessary because of the pandemic and directly related to the imminent health or safety risk arising from the pandemic.

So the Bureau gave a couple of examples of what kinds of calls would qualify under the emergency purposes exception.

For example, a call originating from a hospital that provides vital and time-sensitive health and safety information that citizens welcome, expect and rely upon to make decisions to slow the pandemic, an informational call designed to inform and update the public regarding measures to address the pandemic made on behalf of, and at the express direction of, a healthcare provider.

So while the Commission or the Bureau

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clearly thought this was a really important clarification, given the unusual circumstances and because it was done on its own motion, the Bureau nevertheless cautioned parties not to read the decision as a retreat from our work stopping illegal calls, including scams related to the pandemic.

So specifically, the decision said that any sort of scams or debt collection or telemarketing calls clearly aren't going to qualify for the exemption.

And even as we focus on pandemic issues, I do want to note we're continuing to move forward on other robocalls work including implementation of the TRACED Act and other TCPA issues. So, I'm sure I'll have a lot more to report to you on those things at our next meeting.

And before I hand it off, I want to thank you all for your hard work on the Truth-in-Billing recommendation. We're really looking forward to receiving that.

So with that, I'll turn it over to

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Barbara Esbin.

MS. ESBIN: Hello.

CHAIR POCIASK: Hello, Barbara. Are you there? Hello?

MR. BARTHOLME: Hey, Steve. It's Ed. Barbara just put into the chat that she accidentally disconnected and she'll dial right back in.

CHAIR POCIASK: Oh, okay. So, Diane, did you want to start?

MS. ESBIN: Oh, Mark, I just got back on.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Alright. Great.

MS. ESBIN: I'm sorry. I went to take myself off speaker and completely cut myself off.

Good morning. And I want to echo Mark's thanks for all your hard work. As you know, I oversee CGB's intergovernmental affairs portfolio, including the work of its Office of Native Affairs and Policy, ONAP, and the Office

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of Intergovernmental Affairs, or IGA.

And both offices have been very busy over the past couple of months with COVID-19-related activities as well as their regular outreach efforts.

Starting with ONAP, over the past few months ONAP has regularly disseminated information about actions the Commission is taking to help respond to the coronavirus pandemic that has a potential to help tribal governments and their people.

It's responded to numerous requests from tribes and tribal organizations seeking FCC policies or other actions, as well as advice to help tribal governments and their people maintain adequate and affordable communication services during the coronavirus crisis.

It helped secure a pledge for the National Tribal Telecommunications Association and its members to preserve customer connectivity during the pandemic.

While several NTTA tribal telephone

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members took the chairman's pledge, the organization also came up with a set of pledge obligations that were tailored to the tribal telephone.

ONAP continues to collaborate with other bureaus, maintain ongoing tribal outreach on pending proceedings, such as the 2.5 gigahertz rural tribal priority windows that you heard about earlier and the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Auction 904, including planning an intergovernmental informational webinar in the latter part of May together with IGA and the FCC's Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force.

ONAP also collaborated with the Wireline bureaus to finalize the award of CAF II funds for tribal recipients, including addressing winning tribes' difficulties in continuing to make progress due to the demands of responding to the pandemic.

I work with the Department of the Interior and other federal agencies to revise plans for a second annual National Tribal Broadband

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Summit in light of the coronavirus= ongoing adverse impact on large in-person gatherings.

Finally, ONAP announced the appointment of nine new tribal members to its Native Nations Communications Task Force, filling several vacancies while also raising the total number of tribal representatives on the task force from 20 to 25.

Similarly, over the past few months, IGA has disseminated information about actions the Commission is taking to respond to the coronavirus pandemic that have the potential to help state and local governments and consumers on the state and local level.

It's responded to numerous inquiries from state and local organizations seeking information about Commission policies or other actions, as well as advice to help maintain communication services during the pandemic.

IGA has also continued outreach on the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Auction 904, including joint planning for the webinar that I

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mentioned, an intergovernmental informational webinar scheduled for May 20th.

And it's also coordinated five network regional calls with the task force for more information about the auction.

IGA has released a public notice soliciting nominations for membership on a new FCC federal advisory committee, the Hospital Robocall Protection Group, pursuant to the TRACED Act that Mark mentioned.

And finally, IGA has processed applications for 30 seats on an intergovernmental advisory committee and is hoping to make announcements soon.

So, I'm happy to answer any questions, if you have them. And if not, I will turn the mic over officially to Diane Burstein.

MS. BURSTEIN: Thank you. I couldn't tell if anyone had any questions. So, I'll just launch into my presentation and take questions, if you have any for me, at the end.

I'm Diane Burstein, Deputy Bureau Chief

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for the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, and I oversee the Disability Rights Office.

I wanted to share briefly some of the things that DRO has been working on in response to the pandemic.

Even though we're all working from home, obviously, we continue to receive and process complaints relating to accessibility issues that are filed online -- hello? Can you hear me?

MS. ESBIN: Yes.

MS. BURSTEIN: Okay -- by phone or by the American Sign Language line.

We've seen a number of complaints over the last month relating to the inaccessibility of certain information about the pandemic.

And we're keeping a close eye on that to make sure that critical information is available in an accessible manner for people with disabilities.

To that end, DRO updated and distributed various resources, both for consumers and industry, about the requirements for

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accessible emergency information about the pandemic that were shown on television.

DRO encouraged video programming distributors and programmers to ensure that to the extent that state and local government officials provide ASL interpreting services during their televised emergency announcements and press conferences, the sign language interpreter should be visible on the TV screen at all times to benefit viewers who use ASL.

As many of you know, the FCC is responsible for ensuring that deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and people with speech disabilities are able to communicate via services funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, and that also has been the subject of a lot of activity during the pandemic.

The FCC has been working very hard to make sure that people with disabilities continue to be able to receive these vital services.

And the providers of these services face many challenges during this time. There's

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been a significant increase in usage of the services as people are at home and communicating all day. And the companies themselves are facing their own challenges because of the difficulties faced by their employees.

Many of the providers of those services, up until now, were provided by thousands of employees who worked from call centers to help provide video relay service and IP CTS. So, that obviously presented a number of challenges with the pandemic.

The FCC has been in close contact with these providers and, from the very beginning, took action to make sure the TRS system continued to operate during the crisis.

On March 16th, on our own motion, the FCC granted a variety of temporary waivers of the TRS rules.

We loosened restrictions so that providers of video relay service, which uses American Sign Language interpreters to assist ASL users in communication, were better able to work

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from home.

We also temporarily waived certain other TRS rules to provide needed flexibility -- excuse me -- to providers of IP Captioned Telephone Service to allow them to continue to provide these vital communication services.

On April 3rd, we granted another temporary limited waiver to expand the pool of available sign language interpreters to provide video relay service.

These temporary waivers are due to expire on May 15th and the FCC is continuing to monitor the situation to see whether that deadline needs to be extended given the circumstances.

We also released for comment and petition that we received recently some consumer groups representing people with disabilities that seek certain relief for deaf-blind users of TRS services.

We've been keeping in close touch with consumers, TRS providers, captioning providers, video programmers, and others to ensure that people

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with disabilities continue to receive these vital services during the pandemic and will continue to do so.

Thanks, and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

CHAIR POCIASK: Ed, you can go ahead. We'll get questions at the end.

MR. BARTHOLME: Okay. Thanks for having me. I want to echo the thanks that others have shared for everyone taking time out of their day to join the call.

We are very appreciative, as always, of the work that you do and the support that you give to the FCC.

So, you know, I've got my three divisions and I'll give you a little bit of an overview of what each of them has been doing.

Our Web and Print Division, which I fondly call our Consumer Education Group, has focused a lot of their efforts, in response to COVID, on doing education around scams and hoaxes and phony text message campaigns that we've seen.

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So, in mid-March we created the FCC's COVID scams webpage, which covers a number of different scams.

It's got sample text images that we were sharing. There's actual audio from scam calls so you can hear what a scam call sounds like.

We put out a media advisory about this.

The chairman and others in the agency -- mainly the chairman, has done a number of interviews with different media outlets on this topic to share information about the scams that we're hearing.

And as those of you who are sort of in this space know, scammers constantly adapt. Their pitches change as the headlines change, and this is something that we saw with the coronavirus as well.

Early on the scam focused on testing, you know, you could get a sample test kit delivered to your home, the testing location information possibly being shared. Talked about bogus cures.

Health insurance plans were being touted. That was early.

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By weeks two and three the scams were pivoting to be more focused on financial fears.

So, it was student loan relief, government grants, misinformation about the relief checks that were being discussed in Congress at the time. So, this was even before that bill had passed.

And then more recently, other scams have been adapted to include a reference to COVID.

Last week, I got an unwanted call on my phone about a car warranty and it cited the coronavirus as a good reason to lock in valuable car warranty coverage right now so that I didn't have unexpected bills that I couldn't afford.

So, you know, there's an evolution to these and we're trying to stay on top of that. That page is being updated frequently.

Normally, every few days we're adding new audio or new information about different scams and offers and bogus hoaxes that we've heard about.

I did want to give a shout out to our colleagues over in the Enforcement Bureau who aren't on the call today.

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I know at the last meeting, I believe, you guys had Kristi Thompson join you and she talked a lot about enforcement, but I did want to highlight one thing that they've done in response to COVID scam calls.

They joined, in early April, with the FCC to send warning letters to gateway providers that were allowing COVID scam calls to enter the network.

And the warnings let them know that if they failed to be responsive, that they might have all of their traffic blocked. And they were responsive, thankfully.

So, you can learn more. I'm going to send a link, as follow-up, to Steve and to Scott to share with everybody. And that will include the link to the enforcement letters that went out so you can see those and get a sense of what those were about.

Another thing that we've done on the education front in response to the pandemic, is we developed a home network tip guide for

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consumers.

With so many families having multiple people working, distance learning, streaming, other online entertainment activity, we thought it would be helpful to come up with sort of a home network optimization guide.

The guide is very consumer-friendly and includes a number of easy-to-understand and implement tips to help people get, you know, a stronger internet connection and take advantage of the bandwidth that they have coming to their household.

We've also been assisting the agency broadly and contributing to efforts to track what providers are doing.

There are a number of providers, as was mentioned in -- during the WCB presentation, over 700 have taken the Keep Americans Connected Pledge.

There are also a number that are going above and beyond the pledge.

We've been tracking a lot of that and helping to update that webpage. We have all that

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online. I'll send that link, as well, in the links that I'm going to send as a follow-up.

We similarly created a page to showcase how broadcasters are serving their communities during the pandemic.

So, there's a number of things that broadcast -- NAB has done. There's a number of things that local broadcasters have done to inform their communities to dispel misinformation campaigns.

So, we've got a page that highlights many of those efforts as well and that will also be part of those links that I send around.

All those pages I've mentioned, over the first month that they've been up, have gotten just under 86,000 page views. So, we're seeing a good amount of web traffic going to that content.

In addition to the online guides we've also been doing a lot of social media, working with our Office of Media Relations to get out information through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram.

The team=s come up with about 20 unique

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graphics. Some feature Moe. Some of you may remember Moe. He was in our Communicating During Emergency animated video.

Well, he is now a frequent star of our social media campaigns that have a consumer education or scam awareness focus.

And last Wednesday on Earth Day, the FCC joined the FTC and other agencies for a multi-agency COVID-19 scam chat.

In addition to the social media and the educational work, we've also been helping with translation.

So, the team provided Spanish language versions of the FCC's main COVID response page, which is [fcc.gov/coronavirus](https://fcc.gov/coronavirus), as well as the Keep Americans Connected page.

And then all of our -- the scam education page, the networking tips page and any other consumer content that we've created is translated into Spanish, as well as Korean, Tagalog, traditional Chinese and Vietnamese, as we do for all of our consumer-facing content.

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Beyond education, CGB is continuing to support consumers directly through the FCC's Consumer Complaint Center.

Online complaints continue to be processed and the call center is still available for consumers to call with complaints or inquiries.

And I just want to take a minute or two to share that transitioning the call center to a full telework environment was a major lift and it was accomplished in just under a week.

So, we have traditionally had a setup very much like any other call center where everybody goes into a centralized location and takes phone calls, and now all of those people are doing the same thing from their home.

And that was -- the team deserves a lot of credit for making that happen so quickly and ensuring that we would still have that link to consumers and still be able to serve consumers by helping to intake complaints and inquiries, you know.

Sometimes what we get is basic

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questions. And having that number there, having that stood up and having a team working those lines to answer those questions, it's a major benefit to us as an agency. And I think it's also a great way that we serve the public. So, I do want to acknowledge my team and the contractors that we work with for getting that up and going.

A couple things that were mentioned earlier today that tie into the call center, so Justin talked about public safety and there was a question about do you guys reach out to consumers.

Another thing that the public safety team does have access to is the -- they have visibility into the consumer complaint information that we're taking in.

So, that is another way that they can track consumer experience, concerns, network reliability, questions or complaints.

They have visibility into that and that helps to inform the other things that he covered that they do to sort of verify and fact check what's going on.

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We've also been fielding calls tied to the telehealth program that you just heard about from WCB.

And you may have heard once, twice or many times today, that we do have the Keep Americans Connected Pledge that we are doing, and we have been receiving inquiries related to the pledge since it launched in the middle of March.

Companies are being responsive and continue to process these inquiries as well as all the other consumer complaints that we receive that are served to them by the FCC in a timely manner.

My other team, the outreach team, has definitely been impacted by the transition to full-time telework.

We had to postpone our Arkansas and Louisiana Rural Tour. So I like to think, in my mind, that one of the highlights of me talking to you at these meetings is when I get to tell you about our most recent Rural Tour and the random fast-food place that we got to try or whatever else we learned while we were out on the road.

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Unfortunately, this time I don't have one of those to tell you about because it has -- you know, we've had to stop all travel.

In January, we did have a group that was able to visit Arkansas and New Mexico -- or, I'm sorry, Arizona and New Mexico as part of the January tour.

There was a great series of posts that we did that sort of dispatched from the road-type overview of planning for the tour, what they experienced every couple days along the way on the tour.

I'll send a link to that as well so you can kind of back-read that and get a flavor for what that was like and maybe gain some other insights into how we plan those and what they're like when we're out there doing this.

But Arkansas and Louisiana scheduled for the last week in March, that's been postponed.

We're hoping to reschedule that one when things normalize again and we'll continue to

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look for future opportunities there.

The team, while they're not traveling to meet consumers locally or attend conventions, they're working on adapting to the new and remote environment.

They hosted their April monthly partner meeting over WebEx and that meeting focused on the COVID scams content and the FCC's actions in response to the pandemic. The April newsletter and a recent email blast also highlighted those issues.

They've been getting a lot of questions about the many actions that we've taken.

So, one of the goals of the outreach team is to be a touchpoint for stakeholders and partners that we work with and this is an opportunity where they really have the chance to excel in that role.

So, you've heard a lot of information about different actions the Agency is taking to be responsive to the pandemic.

Some of those actions, you know, people

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have questions, people want to know more information, they want to find the right subject matter expert within the Agency to learn more about that and our outreach team has been fielding those inquiries and trying to funnel people to the right place.

Last week, I had a chance to provide an update on the FCC's efforts to combat unwanted calls to the California Public Utility Commission and a number of providers that serve the State of California, at their annual cramming meeting.

CAOG (phonetic) staff also joined the National Community Action Foundation for a webinar last week and they've been attending a number of different webinars and conferences hosted by partners, other agencies, and just learning how other people are, you know, putting up content and interacting with people and just seeing kind of what works across the space so that we can develop our own outreach campaigns and efforts while we're in this current environment.

So, if you have events where we can be

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helpful or would like for the FCC to present about one of the initiatives you heard today or any of the other consumer education topics that we cover, we're happy to support you, happy to share the consumer information. Please feel free to reach out.

That's what I had for today.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay, Ed. Thank you.

And now, we'll just take a quick moment here and get a couple questions either for Ed, Diane, Barbara or Mark.

I see Susan Grant, you have your hand up. You have a question. She's with the Consumer Federation of America.

Susan.

MEMBER GRANT: Hi. Thank you.

Our household typically has gotten a couple of dozen scammy robocalls a day, but it's gone down to zero.

We're not even getting the calls offering to help us with our credit card rates, and I'm wondering if that's because of those

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enforcement letters or what's happened to all of a sudden eliminate those robocalls that we used to get.

MR. STONE: This is Mark. Ed may have more to add. I think it's sometimes difficult to tie the decrease in robocalls to any one thing, but I certainly think we're optimistic that the enforcement action that's been taken is helpful there.

And we've also heard reports that as other countries that are typically the origin of robocalls have locked down and we're locking down, that they because of that, in part, may be making fewer robocalls.

MR. BARTHOLME: This is Ed. I'll just supplement what Mark said by pointing out that Nomorobo, YouMail, and others in the space I think are citing about a 50 percent decrease in overall call volume.

And a lot -- I think the assumption is that the global stay-at-home orders and lockdowns, like Mark mentioned, have really disrupted call

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center activities in the world.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Let's see. Olivia, you had a question?

MEMBER WEIN: Hi. Can you hear me?

CHAIR POCIASK: Yeah. Everyone please mute, if possible. Thank you.

MEMBER WEIN: This is a question for Ed and it's basically broad brushstrokes in sort of, like, percentages.

Can you sort of describe since March in terms of the complaints you've been hearing or the calls into the call center -- and thank you for shifting that over to that telework situation and keeping that line open -- the number of inquiries or requests for more information versus the number of people calling with actual complaints.

And then in terms of topics of what people are calling about, maybe the most popular three topics. Thanks.

MR. BARTHOLME: I don't have a breakdown since the middle of March in front of me. So, I'd

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hate to go off too much in speculation on numbers.

You know, I think we continue to see a lot of the same things that we always have.

Obviously, the pledge is something that did not exist prior to the middle of March. So, any number of calls related to the pledge is going to be a marketable increase from the zero that were happening before the pledge existed. So, that is something that has been noticeable.

I will say that, you know, it's interesting that the unwanted call -- as Susan was alluding to, unwanted call numbers and complaints do definitely seem to be down. The overall volume to the call center had been down prior to the telehealth program launching.

So, as people started to transition to stay at home and as the virus was sort of captivating the news cycle, we did see an overall decline in call volume and consumer complaint volume.

I just don't think that telecom issues were at the front of people's minds, initially.

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And then obviously, you know, service-related and other billing-related issues, as they happen, we're starting to see people file those complaints now.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Well, thank you.

Look, I want to recognize all of our speakers, the panels today. Everyone was great. Great presentations. Thank you all so much.

And now as our clock -- we're still on the clock here. So, let's turn our attention to Truth-in-Billing.

Alright. So, the Truth-in-Billing Working Group has voted out a recommendation for consideration and we really want to recognize the immense effort of the working group doing what they did under a very short time line.

So, you know, now we'll turn this over to the co-chairs of the Truth-in-Billing Working Group, Vonda and Joslyn.

They'll go through a quick summary. I think everyone has seen the full text. And then we'll hold off the discussion until after they make

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a presentation and put a motion for adoption on the floor. Then, we'll move on with that.

So, at this point, Joslyn, would you like to start?

MEMBER DAY: Sure. Thank you, Steve.

Good afternoon, everyone. I hope that you're staying safe and doing well.

As co-chairs of the Consumer Advisor Committee's Truth-in-Billing Working Group, both Vonda Long-Dillard and I would like to thank the members of the working group for the many hours and efforts that you spent discussing, evaluating and developing a recommendation in response to the FCC's public notice released on December 13, 2019.

In its public notice, the Commission sought input on possible ways to modernize and strengthen its Truth-in-Billing rules, specifically to refresh its record on two issues.

The working group recognized the importance of these issues and has worked diligently and, as Steve said, under very tight circumstances, to consider them to further assist

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and support the Commission in its goal to ensure all voice consumers are better informed of choices in a competitive marketplace.

The working group would also like to recognize Steve Pociask, Debra Berlyn and Scott Marshall for their leadership, guidance and time assisting us through this collaborative process.

Also, due to the current and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and the significant disruption it has caused to Americans, the Consumer Advisory Committee would like to acknowledge and applaud the FCC's leadership launching an initiative to preserve consumers' access to broadband and voice communication service for 60 days via its Keep Americans Connected Pledge.

As we have heard many times today, the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Pledge is right on time.

Now, over 700 service providers have agreed to this pledge. This participation is remarkable and it no doubt protects vulnerable

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consumers during the most difficult times. Again, thank you for your efforts, working group.

Now, I will turn it over to Vonda, my co-chair, to provide a brief summary of the working group's recommendation. Thank you.

MEMBER LONG-DILLARD: Thank you, Joslyn. Good afternoon everyone, the Federal Communications Commission and my CAC Truth-in-Billing Working Group colleagues and everyone.

I'm about to read just a summary of the final working group recommendation on Truth-in-Billing. It's not going to be a full reading.

Whereas the Federal Communications Commission seeks comment on Truth-in-Billing rules to make sure that consumers are provided with information needed to make informed choices about voice communications to identify concrete, cost-effective rules to ensure that consumers fully understand charges on their bills, including nongovernment-mandated, or provider recovery

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costs, and government-mandated program bill line items, whether there should be category fee separation and whether to newly include interconnected voice over internet protocol services to current Truth-in-Billing rules.

The Consumer Advisory Committee Truth-in-Billing Working Group was tasked with evaluating the various elements of consumer telephone bills and adding interconnected voice services to current Truth-in-Billing rules.

Consumers have significantly migrated away from traditional landline service to interconnected voice service, which is sometimes purchased as part of a bundled service package.

Thus clear, easily understood information about service charges and fees on monthly bills is necessary.

Also, to aid in comparison shopping amongst multi-technology service providers in the marketplace.

The Consumer Advisory Committee Truth-in-Billing Working Group recognize that

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detailed, comprehensive data on consumer questions and complaints regarding consumer telephone bills is a requisite to making recommendations for the refreshed public notice released in December of 2019.

Recommended that the Commission continues to examine consumer complaints. And if there is evidence of significant consumer complaints related to interconnected voice, the Commission could consider a new Truth-in-Billing public notice regarding the applicability of adding interconnected voice to rules in the future.

Considerations for the Commission include encouraging fundamental principles for consumer bills upon review of the rules and their value to all voice telephony technologies and revising the consumer complaint intake form, an online portal to gather more robust detail regarding consumer billing complaints for organization, analysis and reporting.

Recommended also that there be a newly created Consumer Advisory Committee Working Group

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to review Truth-in-Billing rules by examining consumer telephone bills holistically, to suggest consumer education for market price comparison, ensure that accessibility processes are updated to accommodate those who need it, and consumer feedback suggestions.

And lastly, recommended that the Commission provide robust, descriptive consumer telephone bill complaint data to help the working group articulate recommendations to consumer comparison shop and better understand voice service bills.

I want to ask, at this time, with that summary, does anyone request a full reading of the recommendations before we proceed?

Hearing none, the CAC Truth-in-Billing Working Group moves adoption of this recommendation.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. So, very well then. So, we have a motion on the floor. Before commencing with any discussion, do we have a seconding motion?

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MEMBER UMANSKY: Second. This is Barry.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. With that, let's open up for discussion. Let me check for hands.

Susan Grant, did you have a question or a comment?

MEMBER GRANT: No. And I took my hand down, so I don't know why --

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. That's fine.

MEMBER GRANT: Sorry about that. I'm just checking. Okay, you're down.

Does anyone else have a question? I'm just checking. I don't see any hands up or anyone can text me or chat.

Are there no questions?

Okay. Any amendments? We can -- if it's friendly, if someone wants to tell me if there's a typo or a wording or punctuation, I can just make a -- we can make a little change to the text now.

Are there any amendments? Well, I don't see any hands up. Alright. So, do we have a

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motion on the floor for a vote? Anyone?

MEMBER UMANSKY: Yes. Barry, a motion.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Do we have a seconding motion?

MEMBER BERLYN: I'll second it. Debbie.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay, Debbie. Thank you.

Alright. So, with that, we can call the roster. This will be a little bit slow. And I'll call your name and then for each organization -- I'll go right back down the list -- just tell me a yea, nay or abstention.

And then at the end, I'll see if I've missed anyone. So, let's begin with Dawit with AARP.

Dawit, are you there? Okay. How about Brian Hurley?

MEMBER HURLEY: Yea.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. I don't think Jonathan is on with ALEC.

Is Jonathan on? Okay. So, that's not

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present.

Katie McAuliffe?

MEMBER MCAULIFFE: Hey, Steve. I'll  
abstain.

CHAIR POCIASK: Abstain. Okay.

Mark Defalco?

MEMBER DEFALCO: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

Vonda?

MEMBER LONG-DILLARD: Yea.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

Shirley Rooker, I don't think she's on.

Shirley, are you on? Okay. And we have from  
Consumer Federation of America, Irene or Susan?

MEMBER LEECH: Yea.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Okay. And then  
Rachel with the Consumer Technology Association.

Rachel?

MEMBER NEMETH: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Alright. Consumer  
Reports. Jonathan, are you still there? I don't  
think he was on earlier. Jonathan? He's not

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present.

Matthew Gerst -- or, Sarah, I guess you're on for CTIA?

MEMBER LEGGIN: Yes. This is Sarah. I vote in favor.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Before I turn this page, I will vote in favor. Debra Berlyn?

MEMBER BERLYN: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Alright.

Zainab with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network?

MEMBER ALKEBSI: Were you able to hear me? I voted yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you. Okay.

Barry Umansky?

MEMBER UMANSKY: Yes and yea.

CHAIR POCIASK: Eric Koch?

MEMBER KOCH: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Johnny Kampis?

MEMBER KAMPIS: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Kyle Hildebrand?

MEMBER HILDEBRAND: Yea.

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CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Joslyn Day?

MEMBER DAY: Nay.

CHAIR POCIASK: That's nay?

MEMBER DAY: Correct.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

Michael Santorelli?

MEMBER SANTORELLI: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

Bohdan Zachary?

MEMBER ZACHARY: Voting yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you.

Larry Walke?

MEMBER WALKE: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thaddeus Johnson?

MEMBER JOHNSON: Nay.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

Olivia Wein?

MEMBER WEIN: Abstain.

CHAIR POCIASK: Steven Morris?

MEMBER MORRIS: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Sam Brinton. Sam?

Is Sam on? How about Lynn Follansbee?

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MEMBER FOLLANSBEE: Yes.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you. Did I miss anyone? Okay. I have 19 yea, I have 2 abstentions and 1 nay.

So with that, the recommendation passes to CAC.

MEMBER LEECH: You have two nays.

CHAIR POCIASK: Hold on. Okay. Hold on. I may have misunderstood. Okay. So, Joslyn, you're a nay.

Who was the second nay?

MEMBER JOHNSON: Thaddeus Johnson.

CHAIR POCIASK: Thank you.

MEMBER LEECH: You're welcome.

CHAIR POCIASK: I misunderstood. Okay. I got it. So with that, it passes. Now, just a couple of other things before we move on to the public for comments.

I just want to mention that it's my understanding that the details for the next meeting haven't been fully determined.

However, for now, continue to hold

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Friday, September 25th on your calendars for the next CAC meeting.

Let me just check the board again. Do any of the CAC members have anything to discuss before we open comments to the public? Let me just check the board here.

Susan, are you okay? Irene, did you have a question or comment?

MEMBER LEECH: I guess I'd like to make a comment.

As a consumer dealing with this, I don't have adequate bandwidth at home to be able to work at home.

And further, even though what they've done is to say that they'll, you know, not turn anybody's service off, last month -- well, my normal bill for my home internet is \$177 for 40 gigabytes of service and we went over that by 10 gigabytes. That was after stopping -- almost stopping using it, and paid an additional \$100.

So, the whole bill for a system that wasn't adequate was \$277. And I share that as an

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example of what consumers are dealing with and the frustrations that we feel with the quality of service.

And I don't know what experience the rest of you are having with all of the online meetings and things that we are using, but it's very clear to me that our system is not adequate to support what's going on and particularly our rural areas, but even some of the people who are calling in from home in the urban areas don't seem to have good service and we have lots of issues with, you know, stability and so forth.

So, I just want to put that out there.

Maybe everybody but me is having a wonderful experience, but it continues to be a struggle for me. Thank you.

CHAIR POCIASK: Yeah. Thank you, Irene.

Yeah, I mean, I -- I think, you know, we've always had good service here, but I have to say there have been times where things have completely slowed down.

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So, I think there's a lot of stress in the network, but I think you have a particular example there of some of the problems that people are facing now.

Do we have any other questions or comments? If so, please raise your hand before we move over to see if there's any public comments.

Okay. Well, Scott, how do I take the public comments? Do I check email? How do we do this? Okay. Well, are there any public comments?

MS. LANGSTON: Steve, this is Catherine with FCC.

CHAIR POCIASK: Yes.

MS. LANGSTON: Oh, Greg, go ahead. I just wanted to update the group and say there have not been any new questions that have come in as of a minute ago.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay.

MEMBER UMANSKY: Thanks, Catherine.

MS. LANGSTON: Sure.

CHAIR POCIASK: Alright. So, with that, if everyone could just unmute again just for

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a second -- mute, I mean, for a second so we can begin wrapping up here.

I mean, I think we've completed our work. Again, I want to thank, you know, all the hard work coming out of the Truth-in-Billing Working Group under the deadline.

And I want to thank all the CAC members and FCC staff for participating today. These were excellent presentations.

Given the sort of diversity we're facing, it seemed to go fairly smoothly. So, thank you.

And also, thank those in the public for joining the call. Everyone, please be safe in these unprecedented times.

And so, with that, I move that the spring 2020 meeting of the FCC's Consumer Advisory Committee adjourn.

Do I have a second motion?

MEMBER UMANSKY: Second from Barry.

MEMBER BERLYN: Second from Debbie.

CHAIR POCIASK: Okay. Everyone is

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always going for seconds here.

(Laughter.)

CHAIR POCIASK: So, with that, I just want to thank everyone. Farewell and take care.

And I really appreciate everyone kind of putting up with -- things went pretty well despite all this adversity that we're facing.

So, thanks again. Everyone stay safe.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:25 p.m.)