May 15, 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- The FCC issued the agenda for its May 18, 2017 Open Meeting, and will consider, among other things: an NPRM and Order that proposes to eliminate the local service rate floor rule. The Order would freeze the current rate floor at $18 pending further action. The FCC will also consider an NPRM that proposes to return internet broadband access service to the classification of Title I information service and seeks comment on the existing rules governing ISPs' practices.

- The FCC provided guidance on rules that prohibit presentations to FCC decision-makers following release of a meeting agenda. The sunshine period for the May 18 meeting began May 12, 2017.

- Democratic Senators sent a letter to Chairman Pai to express opposition to the Open Internet NPRM. Press release.

- NTCA and WTA urged the FCC to: address NTCA’s Petition for Reconsideration of the requirement that carriers impute Access Recovery Charges to standalone broadband connections; resolve how competitive overlaps will be validated; and provide certainty on expense recovery via high-cost USF support. NTCA discussed similar issues in a separate meeting.

- Reply comments were filed on CenturyLink’s Petition for Limited Stay of years six and seven of the ICC transition in the 2011 Transformation Order as it impacts tandem switching and transport charges.

- Reply comments were filed on the challenge process for areas that will be eligible for Mobility Fund Phase II support.

- The FCC announced members for two Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee working groups, Model Code for Municipalities and Model Code for States. The FCC also released presentations from the first meeting of the BDAC: Overview of BDAC; Wireline Infrastructure; and Wireless Infrastructure.

- Comments are due June 12, 2017, on the NPRM, NOI, and Request for Comment on whether the FCC should enact rules to promote the deployment of broadband infrastructure by preempting state and local laws. Replies are due July 10, 2017. FR

- Comments are due June 9, 2017, on the NPRM and NOI on regulatory impediments to wireless network infrastructure investment and deployment. Replies are due July 10, 2017. FR

- Senators introduced the Rural Wireless Access Act of 2017, which would require the FCC to collect mobile broadband coverage data that is valid, consistent, and robust.
USF Reform

- Chairman Pai sent letters to House members on April 28, 2017, in response to their letter urging the FCC to include a tribal bidding credit in the CAF Phase II Order, which was adopted at the February 2017 Open Meeting. Chairman Pai said the CAF Phase II Auction Order did not include a Tribal-specific preference, and said the Commission recognizes costs are higher on Tribal lands and already incorporated that fact into the reserve prices offered to bidders, offering more funding in high-cost Tribal areas. Chairman Pai also said the Tribal Mobility Fund Phase II Order will direct $340 million to build out 40 LTE coverage on Tribal lands.

- NTCA and WTA spoke with Wireline Competition Bureau staff on May 5, 2017, to urge the FCC to address NTCA’s Petition for Reconsideration of the requirement that carriers impute Access Recovery Charges to standalone broadband connections that were in place prior to the 2011 USF and ICC reforms. They asked the FCC to resolve or clarify as soon as possible questions previously raised in their petitions for reconsideration about how competitive overlap will be validated, including adoption and use of the form previously submitted by WTA to undertake that process. They also requested the Commission provide near-term certainty regarding whether and to what degree certain expenses are recoverable, specifically via high-cost USF support.

- NTCA spoke via telephone with Legal Advisors to Commissioners O’Rielly and Clyburn and Wireline Competition Bureau staff on May 9 and 10, 2017, to express its positions on the local service rate floor policy, operating expense cap revisions, imputation of Access Recovery Charges, competitive overlap policy implementation, and expenses recoverable via USF.

- Reply comments were filed on May 11, 2017, on the challenge process for areas that will be eligible for Mobility Fund Phase II support. NTCA said its proposed four-step process for the challenge process appropriately apportions the burdens to providers with the data necessary to support their claimed service territory, while not causing unnecessary delay in the MFII challenge process or requiring excessive filings from parties that would not be dispositive in moving that process forward. AT&T suggested the Commission adopt CTIA’s proposal for identifying rural areas that may be eligible for MF-II support, and proposed a new data collection and challenge process. AT&T said if the FCC declines to adopt a new data collection for MFII purposes, the FCC should adopt AT&T, et al.’s proposal. Verizon also supported CTIA’s challenge process proposal. Replies also filed by: Rural Wireless Association, Wireless Partners, CCA, Deere & Company, and ATN International and Blue Wireless. Order, FNPRM | Notice

- Lake Region Electric Cooperative spoke by telephone with Chairman Pai’s Legal Advisor on May 11, 2017, to discuss its Application for Review of the Wireline Competition Bureau’s August 15, 2016 Order and Order on Reconsideration on challenges to the rural broadband experiments post-selection requirements.

ICC

- Replies were filed on May 11, 2017, on CenturyLink’s Petition for Limited Stay of years six and seven of the ICC transition in the 2011 Transformation Order as it impacts tandem switching and transport charges. ITTA said it agreed with the majority of commenters that the Commission should grant the Petition, and said the few comments filed in opposition to the Petition are meritless. ITTA argued the confusion associated with the years 6 and 7 transitions called for in section 51.907 threatens to foster the competitive harm and arbitrage the ICC transition was designed to eliminate. CenturyLink said themajority of comments support the Petition and supplement the record regarding the irreparable harm that will follow if the stay is not granted. It claimed the oppositions actually support grant of the Petition because they exemplify one of the core reasons underlying the need for the stay, i.e., the fact that carriers throughout the industry are likely to take a variety of different approaches to the section 51.907(g) requirements in the year 6 annual tariff filing process. Sprint said commenters opposing the Petition have demonstrated the requested stay is both procedurally defective and contrary to the public
interest, and should accordingly be denied. Sprint argued to the extent there is any confusion regarding application of sections 51.907(g) and (h), the Commission should expeditiously issue guidance that the “affiliate” as used in these rules should be interpreted consistent with the definition of affiliate codified in section 3 of the Telecommunications Act (47 U.S.C. §153(1)). Replies also filed by: T-Mobile, Wide Voice, and HD Tandem. Public Notice

- AT&T met with Wireline Competition Bureau staff on May 9, 2017, to discuss the current switched access market, AT&T’s Petition for Forbearance on tandem and transport access charges, and the Petition for Declaratory Ruling filed by Bright House, et al. on the intraMTA rule. AT&T asserted opportunities for arbitrage and marketplace inefficiencies remain, and said the statutory test for forbearance is satisfied and the FCC should grant its request. AT&T asked the FCC to clarify whether its rules bar access charges on intraMTA calls exchanged by IXCs and LECs or whether the FCC’s rules permit access charges to be accessed in the absence of an interconnection agreement and information necessary to bill intraMTA calls.

Open Internet

- The FCC issued a Public Notice on May 11, 2017, providing guidance on the rules that prohibit presentations to Commission decision-makers during a period prior to the May 18 Open Meeting on items to be considered at that meeting. The FCC said the sunshine period for the Restoring Internet Freedom NPRM will begin on May 12, 2017, and will continue until the Commission releases the text of the NPRM or removes it from the Open Meeting agenda. The FCC indicated presentations, including comments, that are received during the sunshine period, and do not meet an exception to the Commission’s rules, will be associated with, but not made a part of, the record in the proceeding.

- Thirteen Democratic Senators sent a letter to Chairman Pai on May 9, 2017, to express opposition to the Open Internet NPRM that will be considered at the FCC’s May 2017 Open Meeting. They claimed the NPRM undermines the Open Internet Order, and asserted without the Open Internet Order, ISPs could discriminate against certain services, potentially distorting competition, stifling innovation, and hampering user choice and free expression. Press release.

- Chairman Pai issued a statement on May 11, 2017, following a letter the FCC received from municipal broadband service providers. Pai said 19 non-profit, government-owned ISPs expressed their support for his proposal to end utility-style regulation of ISPs based on Title II. The municipal ISPs had stated “no longer classifying broadband service as a telecommunications service subject to Title II and eliminating the general conduct standard will provide real benefits for our customer-owners with no downside.”

- NCTA met with Legal Advisors to Chairman Pai and Commissioner O’Rielly on May 10, 2017, to express support for the proposal in the draft NPRM to reinstate the prior classification of broadband internet access service as an information service. NCTA also discussed the importance of a uniform federal approach to promoting internet openness, and discussed state and local efforts to regulate BIAS.

- ACA met with Chairman Pai’s Legal Advisor on May 10, 2017, to express support for the NPRM’s goals in returning to the light-touch regulatory approach for ISPs under Title I. ACA discussed the draft NPRM’s legal analysis of the issues arising from the Commission’s proposal to restore the classification of broadband as an information service and the effects of such a decision on regulatory structures created by the 2015 Open Internet Order, such as forbearance.

- Charter Communications met with Legal Advisors to Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly and Clyburn, and Wireline Competition Bureau staff on May 10, 2017, to express support for the proposal to reclassify broadband internet access service as an information service. Charter also discussed
municipal fees and licensing requirements on broadband operations and the impact those regulations have on broadband deployment.

- Seven wireless providers filed a letter on May 11, 2017, to express support for reclassifying broadband as a Title I service. They claimed uncertainty surrounding the Title II regulatory framework for wireless broadband services hinders their ability to meet their customers’ needs, burdens them with unnecessary and costly obligations, and inhibits their ability to build and operate networks in rural America.

- TracFone Wireless met with Legal Advisors to Chairman Pai on May 9, 2017, to discuss whether the proposed reclassification of BIAS from Title II to Title I would have any impact on the Commission’s authority to use USF resources to support BIAS through the Lifeline program, claiming it would have no limiting impact. TracFone also discussed the language in paragraph 68 of the draft NPRM on requiring Lifeline carriers to use Lifeline support for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of broadband facilities capable of providing supported services. TracFone said some might misconstrue that statement as articulating a proposal to limit Lifeline support to providers who offer Lifeline service using their own broadband facilities.

- The Lifeline Connects Coalition met with Chairman Pai’s Legal Advisor on May 11, 2017, to discuss the draft Open Internet NPRM and the Commission’s commitment to support broadband services through the Lifeline program. It also discussed the upcoming increase in the Lifeline minimum service standards and current barriers to entry and industry consolidation in the Lifeline program.

- WISPA met with Legal Advisors to Chairman Pai and Commissioners O’Rielly and Clyburn on May 8, 2017, to discuss the draft Open Internet NPRM and draft Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis. WISPA expressed support for the fundamental principles of openness, transparency, and privacy protection for all consumers, but said given the significant financial burden on small providers encompassed by Title II reclassification, it has concerns about the inaccuracy of the Open Internet IRFA and the Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis in the 2015 Open Internet Order.

- Tech Knowledge met with Chairman Pai and his Legal Advisor and Commissioner O’Rielly and his Legal Advisor on May 9, 2017, to discuss its paper that claimed the FCC lacks authority to classify broadband internet services as telecommunications services because broadband transmissions are not telecommunications. Tech Knowledge also said with respect to whatever net neutrality obligations the FCC might ultimately adopt, the draft NPRM seeks comment on whether the FCC should impose such obligations on all internet intermediaries with substantially the same “gatekeeper” power as internet service providers.

- The Internet Association met with Commissioner O’Rielly and his Legal Advisor and Commissioner Clyburn’s Legal Advisor on May 9, 2017, to express support for the 2015 Open Internet Order. IA said it supports light-touch rules that protect the open internet, suggesting the rules should be ex-ante and enforced by the expert agency. It argued the rules must prohibit BIAS providers from charging for prioritized access, and should apply regardless of whether a user accesses the internet from a wireline, fixed wireless, or mobile broadband provider.

- The American Consumer Institute Center for Citizen Research met with Chairman Pai and his Policy Advisor on May 9, 2017, to express support for recent FCC efforts to revisit Title II regulations. ACI provided a chart showing the cumulative decrease in telco broadband lines since the first quarter 2015, and suggested incumbent telephone services are not dominant services and should no longer be subject to Title II regulations, except in rural markets.

- The Writers Guild of America, West met with Commissioner Clyburn’s Chief of Staff on May 10, 2017, to discuss Open Internet issues. WGAW members discussed their continued support for classification of broadband providers under Title II, and opposed the proposed weakening of the 2015 Open Internet Order. The WGAW also discussed its support for the draft Open Internet NPRM on diverse and independent programming.
LARIAT spoke with Chairman Pai's Legal Advisor on May 8, 2017, to express support for Chairman Pai's desire to reverse the classification of internet access service. LARIAT, however, asked the FCC to delay consideration of the NPRM at the FCC's May 2017 Open Meeting, asserting that if the NPRM is issued, the Supreme Court might deny certiorari to USTelecom v. FCC, a lawsuit challenging broadband classification.

CALinnovates met with Chairman Pai on April 28, 2017, to discuss its preferential path toward a permanent solution to affirmatively enshrine net neutrality into law. CALinnovates discussed enacting bipartisan legislation through Congress rather than relying on a new set of regulations.

Broadband

The FCC published in the Federal Register on May 11, 2017, the NPRM, NOI, and Request for Comment on whether the Commission should enact rules to promote the deployment of broadband infrastructure by preempting state and local laws that inhibit broadband deployment. The Notice also seeks comment on whether there are state laws governing the maintenance or retirement of copper facilities that serve as a barrier to deploying next-generation technologies and services that the Commission might seek to preempt. Comments are due June 12, 2017; replies are due July 10, 2017.

The FCC published in the Federal Register on May 10, 2017, the NPRM and NOI on the regulatory impediments to wireless network infrastructure investment and deployment. Comments are due June 9, 2017; replies are due July 10, 2017.

The FCC issued a Public Notice on May 8, 2017, announcing Chairman Pai has appointed members to serve on two Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee working groups: Model Code for Municipalities and Model Code for States. The FCC said the selection of members for other BDAC working groups is in progress and final selections will be announced later. The FCC also released presentations from the first meeting of the BDAC: Overview of BDAC; Wireline Infrastructure; and Wireless Infrastructure.

Chairman Pai sent letters to House members on April 26, 2017, in response to their letter urging the Commission to task the BDAC with a targeted goal of closing the digital divide in rural America. Chairman Pai said the BDAC will provide an effective means for stakeholders to exchange ideas and develop recommendations to the Commission on broadband deployment. He also said the BDAC will draft for the Commission's consideration a model code for broadband deployment, which will cover local franchising, zoning, permitting, and rights-of-way regulations.

Commissioner Clyburn spoke at the Connected Communities Public Forum on Access and Affordability before the Los Angeles Community Access Network on May 10, 2017, to discuss broadband and the Open Internet Order. She said the broadband availability and affordability gaps are not just in rural towns and non-urban communities. She also asserted in a world without net neutrality, ISPs could charge consumers even more to access their preferred websites, or block those sites all together.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W Va.) issued a Press Release on May 11, 2017, announcing he, along with Sens. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), introduced the Rural Wireless Access Act of 2017, which would require the FCC to collect mobile broadband coverage data that is valid, consistent, and robust. Sen. Manchin said “[t]his legislation is an important step towards ensuring our ongoing efforts to close the broadband gap are guided by a realistic understanding of the mobile broadband coverage currently available to rural consumers.” The bill is not yet available.
USF

- Chairman Pai sent letters to House members on April 28, 2017, to respond to their letter expressing concern with the Commission’s action to revoke the LBP status of nine providers. Chairman Pai said the Order affected less than 1 percent of all carriers providing Lifeline service, and eight of the nine affected carriers had no Lifeline customers. He also said the Commission delegated authority to the Wireline Competition Bureau to act on LBP designations in the Lifeline Modernization Order.

- USAC announced it will hold a webinar on May 24, 2017, on updates to the FCC Form 481, the Carrier Annual Reporting Data Collection Form. The webinar will focus on updates originating from the March 2016 Rate of Return Reform Order, where to file location data for the various high-cost funds (FCC Form 481 vs. HUBB), and price cap reporting for CAF I and CAF II. FCC Form 481 is due July 3, 2017.

- The Wireline Competition Bureau sent a letter to USAC on May 12, 2017, to notify USAC the Wireline Bureau approved the Schools and Libraries Funding Year 2017 Program Integrity Assurance FCC Form 471 Review Procedures, subject to further modifications and/or instruction from the Commission.

State Actions

- The U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota released an Opinion on May 8, 2017, holding that VoIP services provided by Charter Advanced Services to customers in Minnesota should be classified as an information service, and therefore are exempt from state regulation. Charter had filed a complaint seeking to overturn a decision of the Minnesota PUC that would have regulated Charter’s VoIP services as traditional telephone service. The court agreed with Charter that its Spectrum Voice engages in net protocol conversion, and that this feature renders it an “information service” under applicable legal and administrative precedent.

Misc.

- The FCC issued the agenda on May 11, 2017, for its May 18, 2017 Open Meeting. The FCC will consider: an NPRM and Order that proposes to eliminate the local service rate floor rule. The Order would freeze the current rate floor at $18 until the Commission takes further action in this proceeding; an NPRM that proposes to return internet broadband access service to the classification of Title I information service, and seeks comment on the existing rules governing ISPs’ practices; an NPRM that would facilitate the deployment of and reduce regulatory burdens on fixed-satellite service earth stations authorized to transmit while in motion; a Report and Order that would amend provisions of the Personal Radio Services located in Part 95 to update and modernize various rules; a Public Notice that would launch a review of the Commission’s rules applicable to media entities; and an NPRM that would propose to eliminate the Commission’s main studio rule. The FCC will also receive a report from the Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau on its investigation into the VoLTE 911 outage AT&T Mobility experienced on March 8, 2017, and will consider a media-related item as consent agenda.

- NECA filed a letter on May 11, 2017, to clarify the overall settlement increase in its May 3, 2017 Further Modification of Average Schedules.

- The Wireline Competition Bureau issued a Public Notice on May 9, 2017, listing Acknowledgements of Confidentiality filed by parties seeking access to confidential information filed in the special access data collection proceeding. Parties that submitted confidential information in response to the collection have until May 16, 2017, to object to the disclosure of their data and information to any of the parties listed in the Public Notice.
• Sprint and Windstream filed a Petition for Review with the D.C. Circuit Court on May 8, 2018, of the April 28, 2017 Report and Order that found there is strong competition in the business data services market and revised the FCC’s regulatory framework for such services.

• CenturyLink and Frontier filed a letter on May 8, 2017, asking to withdraw their request to declare price cap ILECs non-dominant nationwide in the provision of business data services at all capacity levels. CenturyLink and Frontier said the withdrawal is intended to conserve company and FCC resources that might otherwise be allocated to evaluating a request that has been partly mooted by the Commission’s April 28, 2017 Report and Order.

• Comments were filed on May 8, 2017, on competition in the mobile wireless industry for the FCC’s Twentieth Annual Report on the State of Competition in Mobile Wireless. NTCA attached its 2016 wireless survey report, noting: 50 percent of survey respondents indicated they offer some type of wireless services to their customers; 89 percent of respondents use spectrum to offer fixed broadband, 41 percent fixed voice, 39 percent mobile broadband, and 36 percent mobile voice. Verizon claimed the mobile services market is effectively and intensely competitive. AT&T asserted the FCC should acknowledge the wireless marketplace is effectively competitive. Mobile Future said the Commission should declare the American mobile wireless marketplace to be competitive and focus on adopting policies that promote investment in next generation networks. The Free State Foundation said the FCC should remove Title II regulation of wireless broadband services and return broadband privacy jurisdiction to the FTC. Replies are due June 7. Public Notice | List of all comments available to date

• The Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau issued a Public Notice on May 10, 2017, announcing it will hold a webinar focused on a range of telecommunications and video programming issues related to older Americans on May 22, 2017. Issues to be addressed include robocalls, scams, and accessible communications.

• FCC Chief Information Officer Dr. David Bray issued a statement on May 8, 2017, explaining that delays experienced with the Electronic Comment Filing System were due to multiple distributed denial of service attacks. Bray said the actors were not attempting to file comments themselves, and instead made it difficult for legitimate commenters to file with the FCC. Bray said the Commission has worked with its commercial partners to address the situation and will continue to monitor developments going forward.

• North American Portability Management filed comments on May 8, 2017, on iconectiv’s request for the FCC to approve certain modifications to the LNP Administrator Code of Conduct and to the voting trust agreement. NAPM said it has no objections to iconectiv’s request provided that iconectiv remains subject to its contractual obligations with the NAPM and the FCC ensures that iconectiv remains subject to all of its current regulatory obligations, including all of the FCC’s current neutrality requirements and Orders. Replies are due May 23. Public Notice

• The FCC issued an Order on May 9, 2017, closing the P.O. Box associated with the section 109(b) CALEA petition fees, noting it has not received a section 109(b) petition since 2002. The FCC said future payments for any section 109(b) petition filed with the FCC will be made through the Fee Filer Online System.

Back to Highlights

Upcoming Filing Dates

• May 15 - Replies due on PRTC’s Petition for Declaratory Ruling on whether section 54.320(d)(2) applies to recipients of CAF Phase I Round 2 support. Public Notice

• May 15 - Replies due on ACS’ Petition for Clarification or, in the alternative, petition for limited waiver of the requirement to provide geocoded location information for CAF Phase I deployments. PN
May 16 - Oppositions due to Petitions for Reconsideration of the Mobility Fund Phase II Order. Replies to oppositions due May 26. Public Notice

May 18 - Oppositions due to Petitions for Reconsideration of the CAF Phase II Auction Order filed by Hughes Network Systems and the Pennsylvania PUC and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Replies to oppositions are due May 30, 2017. FR, Public Notice

May 19 - Replies due on FairPoint’s Petition for Waiver of section 54.312(c) to permit it to submit the locations and census blocks in which FairPoint deployed broadband, but for which FairPoint was not authorized, in order to meet the requirements for receipt of CAF Phase I Round 2 support. PN

May 22 - Comments due on WTC Technologies application for authorization to obtain NANP telephone numbers directly from the Numbering Administrators for its iVoIP service. Public Notice

May 23 - Replies due on iconectiv’s request for the FCC to approve certain modifications to the LNP Administrator Code of Conduct and to the voting trust agreement. Public Notice

May 24 - Comments due on actions to accelerate adoption and accessibility of broadband-enabled health care solutions and advanced technologies. Replies are due June 8. Public Notice

May 24 - Comments due on refreshing the record in the separations proceeding and on issues related to comprehensive, permanent separations reform. Replies are due June 8, 2017. Public Notice

May 24 - Comments due on how reforms adopted in the February 24, 2017 Report and Order that streamlined and eliminated various Part 32 accounting requirements impacts Part 36 rules to ensure that jurisdictional separations rules are consistent. Replies are due June 8, 2017. Public Notice

May 26 - Replies due to oppositions to Petitions for Reconsideration of the Mobility Fund Phase II Order. Public Notice

May 30 - Replies due to oppositions to Petitions for Reconsideration of the CAF Phase II Auction Order filed by Hughes Network Systems and the Pennsylvania PUC and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. FR, Public Notice

June 7 - Replies due on competition in the mobile wireless industry for its Twentieth Annual Report on the State of Competition in Mobile Wireless. Public Notice

June 8 - Replies due on refreshing the record in the separations proceeding and on issues related to comprehensive, permanent separations reform. Public Notice

June 8 - Replies due on how reforms adopted in the February 24, 2017 Report and Order that streamlined and eliminated various Part 32 accounting requirements impacts Part 36 rules to ensure that jurisdictional separations rules are consistent. Public Notice

June 8 - Replies due on actions to accelerate adoption and accessibility of broadband-enabled health care solutions and advanced technologies. Public Notice

June 9 - Comments due on the NPRM and NOI on the regulatory impediments to wireless network infrastructure investment and deployment. Replies are due July 10, 2017.

June 12 - Comments due on the NPRM, NOI, and Request for Comment on whether the FCC should enact rules to promote the deployment of broadband infrastructure by preempting state and local laws that inhibit broadband deployment. Replies due July 10, 2017. FR

June 12 - PRA comments due on an extension of a currently approved collection for Part 32, Uniform System of Accounts. Notice
• June 23 - Petitions due on 2017 annual access charge tariffs made on 15 days’ notice; replies due June 27, 2017. Order

• July 10 - Replies due on the NPRM, NOI, and Request for Comment on whether the FCC should enact rules to promote the deployment of broadband infrastructure by preemption of state and local laws that inhibit broadband deployment. Replies due July 10, 2017. FR

• July 10 - Replies due on the NPRM and NOI on the regulatory impediments to wireless network infrastructure investment and deployment.

Back to Highlights

Editor: Teresa Evert | Assistant Editor: Shawn O'Brien