Remote Work? Not in a Digital Desert

As stay-at-home orders spread and millions of workers and students went online to do their jobs or homework assignments, it became clear that the digital playing field was far from level. Digital deserts, where residents have poor or little internet access, are holding rural areas back, educationally and economically. In the long term, advocates hope state lawmakers will push providers to build out their rural networks. Meanwhile, some ISPs, like AT&T, CenturyLink and T-Mobile, were removing data cap limits and keeping customers’ service intact if they couldn’t pay their bills due to COVID-19. Other providers, like Cox, Charter and Comcast, were offering free broadband access to pre-K, grammar, high school and college students during the pandemic.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Fewer but Deadlier Crashes

With many Americans parked at home, health professionals, delivery drivers and other essential workers have had the roadways mostly to themselves. But just because traffic was scarce (down by two-thirds nationally from March 1 to April 10, according to the analytics company StreetLight Data), the roads weren’t necessarily safer. Police in several states reported spikes in fatalities they linked to speeding or reckless driving, despite an overall drop in highway crashes during the pandemic compared with last year. Some drivers might think police are too busy dealing with the coronavirus to chase speeders, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents state highway safety offices. In response, many agencies have sent out public reminders that they are, in fact, still enforcing speed laws.

BUSINESS INTERRUPTION

Coverage for Work Stoppages, Disasters

Lawmakers in at least eight states and Puerto Rico have introduced measures to require business interruption insurance to cover mandatory work stoppages resulting from the coronavirus emergency.