

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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FSF Conference: Short-term Retrans Solutions, Cable Act Overhaul Urged

When it comes to retrans rules, almost all the speakers at free market think tank **Free State Foundation's** annual telecom conference Thurs are on the same page. As **NCTA** head *Michael Powell* said, "you can debate what the rules should be" but it's not debatable that the rules are outdated. Even **FCC** Media Bureau chief *William Lake* called the current retrans regime "odd." While a rewrite of the '92 Cable Act will be a job for the Congress, "it's not too early for us to be considering experiments" that reflect the changing video market, Lake said. In addition, though the agency hasn't acted on a retrans NPRM that's a couple of years old, the proceeding is "not dead," he said. "We continue to look at it and to watch events in the marketplace." The Act was designed to protect the broadcast business model when OTT viewership was close to 70% vs 14% now, noted Powell. While the long-term solution is a comprehensive Cable Act rewrite, a real opportunity is to look at existing statute under which the FCC could potentially address retrans issues, said *Steve Teplitz*, svp, govt relations, **Time Warner Cable**. *Stacy Fuller*, **DirectTV's** vp, regulatory affairs, also slammed the decades-old rules. Video is "the only market that competition has led to higher costs," she said, citing program bundling, forced bundling and program package requirements that limit consumer options. In '12, more than 100 markets have had blackouts, she said. The best vehicles for retrans reform is the FCC but the agency interprets its authority too narrowly, said **Public Knowledge's** *Gigi Sohn*. Congress could extend the forbearance authority so that the FCC could eliminate outdated regulations, commish *Ajit Pai*, speaking at the event earlier, and others suggested. In addition, as Congress again reviews STELA (the Satellite TV Extension and Localism Act), the argument over retrans reform could come up again. Court proceedings like the net neutrality case, the **Cablevision/Viacom** dispute and the **Aereo TV** case could also be vehicles for changes in retrans, especially when the losing side seeks Congressional remedy, several speakers said. Data caps also were discussed at the DC event. The industry is still in an experimental phase, Powell said. "Price variation models are not inherently good or bad... They are used and accepted widely," he said. The key is to figure out the fairest way to allocate the massive investment in broadband networks, he said, adding that data isn't an infinite resource. Powell suggested caps could incentivize developers to design bandwidth efficient apps.

Rubio Speaks: Telecom policy will be high on Sen *Marco Rubio's* (R-FL) agenda this year. "Telecom gets less cover-

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age than issues like tax or energy policy” but it’s just as important, he told the audience at the annual conference of **Free State Foundation** Thurs. Specifically, Congress needs to move beyond the ’96 Telecom Act, he said. “We need laws with flexibilities” that don’t limit how services are delivered or what kind of services are provided, he said. **FCC** reform is also on the list as completing the transition to an all-IP world requires “a regulatory agency that works,” said Rubio, a member of the **Commerce Committee**. The agency needs to do a better job following deadlines and staying on schedule, he said. Keeping the Internet free from regulation “both at home and abroad,” will also be high on Rubio’s to-do-list. At home, he hopes the court can overturn the FCC’s net neutrality order. The junior Sen also touched on spectrum, calling on the FCC to look beyond spectrum auctions to free up more spectrum. All options need to be explored, including unlicensed use, he said, citing cable ops’ initiative to deploy WiFi across the country.

Brian on Brian: Kudos to **The Carlyle Group’s David Rubenstein** for getting **Comcast Corp** chmn/CEO **Brian Roberts** to get a little personal during their hour-long interview Thurs before the Economic Club of Washington. Re-marking that, at least in his observation, driven business leaders rarely produce driven business sons, Rubenstein asked what it’s like to “work for your father when you’re as driven as he is.” Roberts pointed to the 40-year age gap between the 2. Father **Ralph Roberts** is 93. “There wasn’t a period where we were trying to do exactly the same thing at the same time,” the Comcast chief said, also crediting the elder’s personality. “My father is the last person to speak in a room. He is the most gracious, humble, quiet, unassuming, tough when needs to be person. Just the greatest. And not just with me.” Roberts tackled the area of customer service, praising **Comcast Cable** head **Neil Smit** for progress, though he admitted there is still a ways to go. Some of cable’s customer service reputation relates to the nature of what’s being sold, he said. “It’s inherently unpopular to ask people to pay for television, and whether you like it or not, we’re the ones collecting the bill,” Robert said. “Every single content company, sports company, entertainer, journalist gets a raise every year so we have to go back and raise rates every year.” The Comcast chief showed off the cloud-based X1 platform, which is rolling out to D.C. in the coming weeks. He also demonstrated a voice-activated guide that has launched on an iPhone and Comcast hopes to launch on its next-generation remotes. “We’ve listened to customers. It’s tough to click buttons,” he said of the traditional guide and remote. Another bonus: you don’t have to aim the new remotes at the set-top.

In the States: **GCI** announced the initial deployment of **TiVo** Premiere Q 4-tuner DVRs and the TiVo Mini low-cost IP set-top. It plans to offer the 6-tuner **Pace XG1** gateway later this year. -- **Cox** expanded its cloud-based storage service (free for HSD subs) to mobile devices. Cox Secure Online Backup apps are available for iPhone and Android phones.

March Madness: A record of nearly 8.15mln **NCAA** Men’s tourney brackets were submitted to **ESPN.com**, easily surpassing last year’s record of 6.45mln. Women’s brackets will be accepted through Sat morning. -- **TruTV’s** doubleheader Wed grossed 2.25mln total viewers, making it the most-watched 2nd day of the NCAA First Four. The net’s Tues doubleheader grossed a 1.5 US HH rating, which was even with last year’s first 2 telecasts.

Upfronts: Repeatedly referring to the **Crown Media Family** of networks as “unique” and “under the radar” because of their independence from “media conglomerates,” pres/CEO **Bill Abbott** told reporters at its NY upfront event that the move into original scripted programming (4 shows total during the 2013-14 season) combined with its daytime block anchored by “Home & Family” and “Marie” and recent acquisitions (“The Good Wife,” “Home Improvement” and “Middle”) will effectively transform the brand. **Hallmark Channel** will be “a completely different network than we were in 2010,” said **Michelle Vicary**, evp, programming, with scripted being “the natural next step in our evolution,” she said. Hallmark Channel and Hallmark Movie Channel will up original movie development to 50 productions in ’14, compared to 27 in ’10. Holiday programming hours will peak at 1,850 this year, compared to ’10’s slate of 464 hours, and original movies during the holiday season on both nets will increase to 13. **Hallmark Movie Channel** will have 14 new titles this year, more than double that of ’12. It will air its 1st original holiday movie, “Christmas with Tucker,” starring **James Brolin**. Additionally, “Home & Family” was greenlit for a 2nd season on Hallmark Channel. According to evp, ad sales **Ed Georger**, the show has drummed up interest from new categories of advertising, including home and food products, pet care, health and beauty, insurance and appliances. Abbott added that he hopes the automotive category will open up with the addition of scripted.

On the Circuit: **The T. Howard Foundation** annual dinner recognized 3 powerful women in cable Wed night. **Time**

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Warner Cable's Melinda Witmer accepted the Executive Leadership Award, **BET's Debra Lee** received the Executive Trailblazer honor and **AETN pres/CEO Abbe Raven** accepted the Corporate Leadership Award. More from the night at **CableFAX.com**.

People: WE hired **Mark Neschis** as svp, PR. He most recently served as corp comm dir for **Wenner Media**, where he oversaw communications for **Rolling Stone, Us Weekly** and **Men's Journal**. -- **Chanon Cook** was upped to svp, strategic insights and research at **Comedy Central**. -- **Cristiana Falcone Sorrell**, sr adviser to the chmn at the **World Economic Forum**, and "Inside Edition" anchor **Deborah Norville** were elected to **Viacom's** board, which expanded from 11 to 13 members.

Obit: Rena Golden, sr dir of digital content for **The Weather Company**, passed away Wed after a battle with lymphoma. Golden was a **WICT** Betsy Magness grade and former **CNN** exec. She was 51. "For those of us who had the pleasure to work with her, we can take comfort in knowing how much we enjoyed that time and how fortunate we are to have had her in our lives," Weather chmn/CEO **David Kenny** said in a message to employees. A funeral service open to all touched by Golden is slated for Sun at 4pm in Marietta, GA, at Temple Kol Emeth.

Oops!: Scripps Networks Interactive hired **Karen Bronzo** as vp, ad sales marketing for **HGTV** and **DIY**.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	03/21 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	03/21 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
DIRECTV:	54.75	(0.58)	CONVERGYS:	17.20	0.01
DISH:	36.85	0.37	CSG SYSTEMS:	19.93	0.12
DISNEY:	56.31	(0.63)	ECHOSTAR:	38.11	0.11
GE:	23.29	(0.17)	GOOGLE:	811.26	(3.45)
NEWS CORP:	30.18	(0.2)	HARMONIC:	5.73	(0.09)
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	14.70	(0.11)	INTEL:	21.04	(0.14)
CHARTER:	102.36	(3.41)	JDSU:	13.71	(0.59)
COMCAST:	40.40	(0.58)	LEVEL 3:	20.20	(0.22)
COMCAST SPCL:	38.37	(0.57)	MICROSOFT:	28.11	(0.2)
GCI:	8.93	0.20	RENTRAK:	21.07	0.07
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	69.36	(0.63)	SEACHANGE:	11.84	(0.03)
LIBERTY INT:	21.48	0.04	SONY:	17.31	(0.4)
SHAW COMM:	24.28	(0.15)	SPRINT NEXTEL:	6.06	0.03
TIME WARNER CABLE:	93.83	(1.79)	TIVO:	12.43	(0.21)
VIRGIN MEDIA:	46.82	(0.07)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	23.19	(0.06)
WASH POST:	441.06	(2.04)	VONAGE:	2.81	UNCH
PROGRAMMING					
AMC NETWORKS:	60.88	(0.43)	YAHOO:	22.86	0.77
CBS:	45.89	(0.39)	TELCOS		
CROWN:	1.98	(0.02)	AT&T:	36.15	(0.04)
DISCOVERY:	78.41	(0.55)	VERIZON:	48.80	0.20
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	25.70	(0.48)	MARKET INDICES		
HSN:	55.20	(0.52)	DOW:	14421.49	(90.24)
INTERACTIVE CORP:	43.70	(0.38)	NASDAQ:	3222.60	(31.59)
LIONSGATE:	22.52	(0.23)	S&P 500:	1545.80	(12.91)
OUTDOOR:	8.76	(0.01)			
SCRIPPS INT:	64.52	(0.86)			
STARZ:	20.95	(0.17)			
TIME WARNER:	56.11	(0.25)			
VALUEVISION:	3.36	0.03			
VIACOM:	62.94	(0.73)			
WWE:	8.63	0.02			
TECHNOLOGY					
ADVANTAGE:	2.38	0.06			
ALCATEL LUCENT:	1.45	(0.02)			
AMDOCS:	35.61	(0.25)			
AMPHENOL:	72.75	(0.41)			
AOL:	35.58	1.08			
APPLE:	452.73	0.65			
ARRIS GROUP:	17.24	(0.31)			
AVID TECH:	6.82	(0.12)			
BLNDER TONGUE:	1.36	(0.02)			
BROADCOM:	34.47	(0.7)			
CISCO:	20.84	(0.83)			
CLEARWIRE:	3.23	0.01			
CONCURRENT:	7.76	0.05			



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PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Let's Get Biblical

When GSN announced it was launching "American Bible Challenge" last year, my first thought was of a boring vacation Bible school quiz-off followed by a round of Kool-Aid and cookies. But thankfully GSN thought much bigger than my childhood Bible Bowl days. The series, produced by **RelativityReal**, tapped comedian and Christian *Jeff Foxworthy* to host, found fun teams to compete (rapping hip-hop artists, Mee-maw and her grandkids) and imagined what sort of 140-character missives Biblical figures would tweet ("Overheard the Lord tell my husband I'll b w/child, a son... at age 90! LOL! #Grin&Barren"). The combo worked, with the Aug debut garnering the net's highest delivery in its 17-year history (2.3mln total viewers for the night and 1.7mln for the premiere ep). "The Christian community is a pretty big game show viewer to begin with because it is family programming," said *Amy Introcaso-Davis*, GSN evp, programming and dev. "It is a community that tends to come to us naturally. We just wanted to get more of them." Season 2 kicked off Thurs (Mar 21, 9pm) with musician *Kirk Franklin* joining as musical co-host. The diverse lineup of teams for this season includes the Rockin' Rabbis, Team Christian Wrestling Federation and some volleyball-spiking nuns. "One of the reasons I think this shows works so well is that it was very important for us to get a host that has a belief system that follows this. Jeff Foxworthy does that, and he just happens to be a great game show host and one of the funniest comedians in America," Introcaso-Davis said. Foxworthy's walking the talk includes leading a weekly Bible study in Atlanta for the homeless. ABC is part of GSN's programming expansion, which includes the debut this month of "Family Trade." In it, a family in VT accepts barbers for down payments at their car dealership. "For us, it's a different format... But I was watching one of our old game shows and thought 'Family Trade' has more gaming elements in it. There is risk and reward in all of those kinds of shows," said Introcaso-Davis. "We'd love to bring audiences to us for that, too." - *Amy Maclean*

Reviews: "Phil Spector," Sun, 9p, **HBO**. Filmmakers must be salivating at the chance HBO gave acclaimed playwright *David Mamet*: write and direct a film about the murder trials of legendary record producer *Phil Spector*, with *Al Pacino* playing Spector and *Helen Mirren* as *Linda Kenney Baden*, his lawyer. The film's first problem is an opening screen stating it "is a work of fiction... inspired by actual persons in a trial... it is neither an attempt to depict the actual persons, nor comment upon the trial or its outcome." HBO's lawyers might have insisted on that, but even they couldn't thwart Mamet, a master of dialogue, or Pacino and Mirren. The combination results in a verbal wrestling match between 2 brilliant characters. -- "Bomb Girls," season 2 debut, Wed, 8p ET, **Reelz**. If this series did nothing else but shine a light on the role of women in Canada during WWII, it would be worthy of a look. Fortunately, it does far more and features fine work from *Jodi Balfour* as a patriot who foregoes privilege to work on the factory floor. -- "Monsters and Mysteries in America," premiere, Sun, 10p, **Destination America**. Do you believe? These people do as they talk about their encounters with 9-foot-tall, to-be-determined beasts in the Appalachian forest, or little green men with red eyes. *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable Rankings (3/11/13-3/17/13)			
Mon-Sun Prime			
1	USA	2.3	2265
2	HIST	2.2	2197
3	DSNY	1.9	1877
4	A&E	1.5	1459
4	FOXN	1.5	1423
6	TBSC	1.4	1364
7	ESPN	1.3	1233
8	TNT	1.2	1203
9	HGTV	1.1	1096
10	AMC	1.0	980
10	LIFE	1.0	969
12	ADSM	0.9	939
12	NAN	0.9	862
12	FX	0.9	855
15	FOOD	0.8	836
15	DISC	0.8	835
15	DSE	0.8	58
18	TLC	0.7	709
18	SYFY	0.7	698
18	FAM	0.7	685
18	BRAV	0.7	678
18	MSNB	0.7	631
23	TVLD	0.6	602
23	SPK	0.6	589
23	BET	0.6	570
23	TRU	0.6	568
23	MTV	0.6	553
23	ID	0.6	521
23	LMN	0.6	515
30	CMDY	0.5	522
30	APL	0.5	465
30	HLN	0.5	457
30	HALL	0.5	406
30	NGC	0.5	404
30	MLBN	0.5	366
36	CNN	0.4	436
36	ESP2	0.4	431
36	EN	0.4	383
36	VH1	0.4	379
36	TRAV	0.4	334
36	NKJR	0.4	323
36	GSN	0.4	320
36	OXYG	0.4	312
36	H2	0.4	255
36	HMC	0.4	175
36	FXDN	0.4	76

*Nielsen data supplied by ABC/Disney

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