

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Broadband Beat: FCC Committee Nominations and the Digital Divide

Nominations for the **FCC's** Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee were due Feb 15, with the first meeting expected to take place this spring. No word yet on who will be on the 2-year committee, but correspondence with members of Congress offers up the names of a few of the people nominated. Among them is *Marty Yudkovitz*, a member of **Cincinnati Bell's** board of directors. His career has included running **The Walt Disney Company's** strategic innovation group and serving as president of **TiVo**. He also played a key role in the creation of **NBC's** cable and digital business, including the formation of **CNBC**. Yudkovitz has gotten the endorsement of Ohio representative *Bob Latta* (R) and *Sherrod Brown* (D). **North Georgia Network** pres/CEO *Paul Belk* also has been nominated for the committee. Belk previously operated **EPB Fiber Optics of Chattanooga**, the nation's largest municipally owned fiber optic network that is perhaps best known for its "Gig to the Home" project. He is also the founder of the **Fiber Network Owners Alliance**. Other names in the running include *Brian Boisvert*, CEO/gm of Kansas-based **Wilson Comm**, and **Minnesota Office of Broadband Development** executive director *Danna Mackenzie*. *Ajit Pai* announced the formation of the new federal advisory committee shortly after he assumed the role of FCC chairman in January. The committee is expected to serve for two years and provide recommendations for how the FCC can accelerate the deployment of high-speed Internet access. Pai has said his first full day at the agency included a meeting with staffers where he "made it clear there would be no higher priority than closing the digital divide that persists in this country." Such talk has cable's attention. After all, it has seen plenty of government funding over the years actually go to help fund competitors in markets that already have at least one broadband provider. **NCTA** (which nominated vp, external & state affairs *Rick Cimerman* for the broadband committee) has been out and about recently talking about the importance of making sure unserved markets get priority. "We hope Congress and the new administration will adopt a zero tolerance policy for overbuilds across all federal broadband support programs," NCTA said in its blueprint for how policymakers can strive for effective broadband policies. **ACA** also is hoping to be a part of these digital divide discussions, nominating itself for the committee with svp, govt affairs *Ross Lieberman* as its representative. On Tuesday, the organization for small and indy cable operators wrote a letter for Pai urging a light regulatory touch to the provision of broadband. In addition to encouraging the FCC to reverse course on Title II, ACA called on the FCC to

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make sure that support to unserved areas features a competitively neutral process. “The Commission has taken a series of steps to achieve this aim with its adoption and implementation of a competitive bidding process for the distribution of Connect America Fund Phase II support for unserved areas,” ACA wrote. “Having a competitively neutral process that maximizes participation is especially valuable because it would allow smaller, experienced broadband providers to have equal opportunities to bring their expertise and capabilities to bear to deploy networks in unserved areas.”

Investment Conference: A day after distributors had their turn on stage, programmers took the spotlight at the **Deutsche Bank’s** Media & Telecom conference. **Time Warner’s** *Jeff Bewkes* said in 3-5 years, he still expects the bulk of consumers to come through the traditional MVPD-programmer network ecosystem. “I think you’ll see the networks and packages evolving into a bigger variety of skinnier and full packages. You’ll have some genre focused packages in sports and other kinds of things,” he said, noting that Time Warner is focused more on VOD, including stacking rights and the tech platform. -- **Viacom** CEO *Bob Bakish* promised that there should be a management announcement for Paramount studio soon. He also talked up the potential of better integration between brands. “Comedy Central is very good at identifying talent that ultimately becomes loved by consumers in the US and beyond... And in the case of *Amy Schumer*, certainly made her famous. Then when she went on to grow and enter the film business, she went and did a film with **Universal**,” he said, also noting *Jordan Peele* of “Key & Peele’s” recent theatrical success with horror flick “Get Out” with Universal. “There’s a significant opportunity to manage talent across the lifestyle within our company by running it not as a set of silos, but really as a much more integrated company.” **21st Century Fox** CFO *John Nallen* also made an appearance, seeming highly confident in continued affiliate fee increases. “The company has gotten out of small nets and focused on 5 big brands (**Fox, Fox News, FX, Fox Sports** and **Nat Geo**) to go to market with, which management believes gives 21CF leverage,” analysts at Wells Fargo Securities noted.

Pai Renomination: No shocker here, but President *Trump* has renominated *Ajit Pai* to the **FCC** for a new 5-year term. The move comes less than 2 months after he was named chair of the agency and a day after the Republican met with Trump. Cable’s been pretty warm to Pai so far. “In just a few short months, Chairman Pai has embarked on a thoughtful, pro-consumer agenda that focuses on promoting Internet freedom and expanding the benefits of broadband to all Americans. We look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Pai and his colleagues over the coming years.” **NCTA** chief *Michael Powell* said in a statement. Pai would have to leave at the end of the year if he’s not reconfirmed by the Senate for another term (unlikely). Trump still must nominate 2 more commissioners to fill the empty seats of *Jessica Rosenworcel* and former chmn *Tom Wheeler*. **ACA** pres/CEO *Matt Polka* praised Pai for showing that he understands by applying “light-touch regulations and removing barriers to deployment,” broadband providers will accelerate their investments.

March Madness: **Turner Sports** and **CBS Sports** will provide live coverage of all 67 games from the 2017 **NCAA** Division I Men’s Basketball Championship across **TBS, CBS, TNT** and **truTV**—with all games streamed on NCAA March Madness Live. The Regional Final games will once again be split by TBS and CBS. TBS this year will air the games on Saturday, March 25, while CBS will televise the games on Sunday afternoon, March 26. Coverage of the 2017 Division I Men’s Basketball Championship will begin with a 90-minute Selection Show this Sunday from 5:30-7pm on CBS. Turner and CBS will also return “March Madness Confidential,” providing exclusive, behind-the-scenes access of select NCAA



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Tournament teams, with features airing during studio coverage and on NCAA.com, chronicling their Tournament journeys. -- **Cox** is using its recently launched **Yurview** network (available to Cox video subs in all markets) to deliver exclusive basketball debate and analysis tied to the NCAA tourney. Beginning Sunday, Yurview will host a weekly show called "Dash to the Desert" that provides debate and analysis. It's hosted by former NCAA coach *Vin Parise* and former NBA player and current analyst *Scott Williams*. The net will continue to provide local programming in Cox markets, such as high school and college sports. Additional Yurview coverage plans include the upcoming SXSW festival and **Cox Business's** hackathon.

Boomerang OTT Launch: **Turner** and **Warner Bros** have partnered on a new video subscription service—**Boomerang**—launching in the spring. But this is not an **Esquire Network** situation. Boomerang the linear channel will continue and have new programming. The Boomerang direct-to-consumer offering will be the first time Turner and Warner Bros have offered the massive **Hanna-Barbera**, **Looney Tunes** and **MGM** animation library of over 5,000 titles on a streaming platform. Franchises include "Scooby Doo," "Tom & Jerry," "Bugs Bunny" and "The Flintstones," and many others. New content will be added weekly for kids, families and animation lovers. Boomerang will also be the exclusive home to a slate of new, original series, including Warner Bros. Animation's "Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz." The service will be ad-free and launch domestically on Web, iOS and Android devices for \$4.99 per month (with a 7-day Free Trial) or \$39.99 annually (with a 30-day Free Trial). It will expand to several more platforms after launch, including **Amazon**, **Roku** and **Apple TV**.

Carriage for INSP: Score one for the independents! **Cox** added family-entertainment network **INSP** to its high definition channel line-up. The HD feed will offer original and exclusive content, including the latest motion picture from INSP Films, "Heritage Falls," and new seasons of INSP's original award-winning shows "State Plate," and "Handcrafted America." INSP is available nationwide to more than 81mln homes.

On the Hill: A bill introduced by Sen *Jeff Flake* (R-AZ) would remove the **FCC's** broadband privacy rules and prevent similar regs in the future. It's opposed by Dems and net neutrality advocates. The **Consumer Technology Assn**, however, supports the measure, saying the FCC rules threaten to undermine innovation. -- Alarmed by FCC chair *Ajit Pai's* decision to rescind a report detailing the E-Rate program, a group of 12 senators led by *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) want the chairman to guarantee the program will "not be undermined in any way under your watch."

BritBox Debut: **BBC Worldwide** and **ITV** have joined forces to launch **BritBox**, a SVOD service offering a collection of British programming to US audiences. BritBox is the largest library of British programming with thousands of hours of content available. Now, for the first time, US viewers can access several of their favorite current series only a day or so after they first air across the pond. BBC Worldwide and ITV have helped launch today's hottest stars including *Ricky Gervais*, *Hugh Laurie*, *Colin Firth*, *James Corden* and *Idris Elba*—all of whom have some sort of presence on this new service.

In the Community: **Altice USA** and **i24NEWS** launched a new experiential media program for NY tri-state area high schools called "Altice Connects Global Voices." Students from local high schools can engage with the i24NEWS team to discuss current events, develop informed opinions and understand global awareness, tolerance, and journalistic integrity. Students will also participate in the creation of media content they can share via social media and on AlticeConnects.com.

People: More changes at **MTV**, with *Lily Neumeyer* elevated to head development for MTV and **VH1**. She most recently served as head of development for VH1. She will continue to report directly to *Nina Diaz*, head of unscripted for MTV and VH1. Neumeyer replaces *Eli Lehrer*, who is leaving the company. -- *Dario Spina* has been named CMO of **Viacom Velocity**, the full-service partner marketing and creative content group. Spina will oversee all U.S.-led partner marketing and creative efforts for the networks within Viacom's Global Entertainment Group. -- **MLB Network** promoted *Brent Fisher* svp, distribution, affiliate sales & marketing and *Erick VanTuyl* to svp, business & legal affairs.

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