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What the Industry Reads First

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Trump's Day: Before Healthcare Bill Crumbled, There Was Charter

Making it into a *Donald Trump* tweet can be perilous, but **Charter** was on safe ground Friday as the president used the missive to highlight the company's \$25bln investment in broadband infrastructure and technology over the next four years. Charter CEO *Tom Rutledge* met with Trump in the Oval Office in the morning to tout the investment along with the company's commitment to hire 20K American workers over the next four years. The videotaped meeting with Rutledge may have been the highlight of the day for Trump, as he later suffered a huge setback with Republicans pulling legislation to repeal the Affordable Healthcare Act. Remarking on Charter's bankruptcy past, Trump said "Tom Rutledge and his team turned the company around, and they did it very quickly. They created a culture of customer service and excellence. And most importantly, the brought back many jobs that had been shipped overseas..." The president highlighted Charter's commitment to base all of its call centers in the US and bring all of **Time Warner Cable's** call centers back to the US (50% of its calls were outsourced). "You watch. It will be one of your really fantastic decisions," Trump said, later tossing out the word "bigly" while talking about his aim to "massively eliminate job-killing regulations." "Charter has been in-sourcing jobs for the last five years, and as a result of that, our company has performed tremendously," Rutledge said. "Using high skilled, high quality workers actually saves money." Charter was vocal about this plan even before the TWC transaction closed last May. The new news Friday was the \$25bln broadband investment, which Rutledge said is happening because of the right regulatory environment. Recall that the Charter chief remarked in December that he didn't realize how caught up he had gotten into the psychology of the previous regulatory environment. "Gosh, it's gone. It's pretty cool," he said, adding that Title II hasn't really hurt Charter, but it has the potential to hurt us. Charter used the White House visit to announce the opening of its first Spanish-language call center, which will be located in McAllen, TX. Customer operations evp *Kip Mayo*, also present at the meeting, said more than 100 employees have already been hired for the center, which is expected to open next month. The bilingual center is expected to have more than 600 employees. Charter posted a video about the center Friday featuring *Anabel Chavez*, a McAllen native who will run the operation. Chavez knows a few things about outsourcing. According to **LinkedIn**, she previously was director of program management for **Convergys**, which provide outsourced customer care.

Comcast Streaming: A **Bloomberg** report that **Comcast** has reportedly gained the rights to offer programming outside of its footprint raised excitement Friday that the MSO may be considering a national streaming offering. However, execs have repeatedly downplayed the notion, saying they don't see the business case for it at this point. It probably shouldn't be a shocker to anyone that the biggest US cable operator and second largest MVPD behind **AT&T** is collecting these rights—after all, most of them are available through most-favored nations clauses. The real shockwaves will come if/when Comcast makes a move to do something with them. Based on recent comments, we're not anticipating a move in the near future.

Copyright Legislation: A bill to amend appointments of future Registers of Copyrights so that the position is nominat-



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ed by the president and confirmed by the Senate was introduced in the House Friday. It would limit the Register position to a 10-year term. Groups like the **MPAA** and **NAB** favor the bill, saying it's time to modernize the Copyright Office.

Ratings: The US' 8-0 victory over Puerto Rico in Wednesday's World Baseball Classic championship game delivered 364K viewers for **ESPN Deportes**, with **ESPN2** simulcast contributing an additional 397K. -- **AMC's** "Into the Badlands" delivered 4.5min viewers Sunday in L+3. Its 2.7min viewers 25-54 make it cable's #1 returning show for the year in the demo.


Programming: Discovery has a lot of motor shows on the air right now. They're doing so well, it's adding another, "House of Cars" (WT). Produced by **Coolfire Studios**, the car-building series will join the Motor Monday programming block. -- One of the big projects for **Viacom's** soon-to-branded **Paramount Network** is a 6-part series based on the 51-day standoff with Branch Davidians in Waco. *John Leguizamo* has signed on to play ATF agent *Robert Rodriguez* in "Waco," which will premiere on the net next year. -- Another big production on the horizon is **Univision's** "El Chapo," a co-production with **Netflix** airing in Spanish with English subtitles. Univision announced actor *Marco de la O* will play the title role. El Chapo debuts April 23 on Univision. -- **AMC** will air a special edition of its "Talking" after show franchise with *Chris Hardwick* after the Season 3 premiere and finale eps of "Better Call Saul." The show returns on April 10. -- *Donald Trump* and *George W Bush* are set to appear in upcoming **Golf Channel** special "Jack," a 3-parter on *Jack Nicklaus* (premiere April 9, following the Masters). The film features nearly 100 interviews, with *Tom Selleck* narrating.

Startup Support: Comcast NBCU will launch "The Farm Startup Accelerator" in Atlanta to be managed and developed by **Boomtown**. It's the latest initiative in Comcast NBCU's LIFT Labs for Entrepreneurs program, which is designed to provide entrepreneurial support in various cities. And it's the first accelerator for Boomtown outside Boulder. The flagship LIFT Labs location will be based in Philly at the new Comcast Technology Center that opens next year. The Farm will focus on mobility, connectivity and communications companies while also actively considering other businesses that can benefit from the Comcast NBCUniversal/Boomtown partnership. The Farm Startup Accelerator will open applications for its first class later this summer, and the inaugural program will launch in early 2018. More info can be found at www.TheFarmATL.com.


Top Lawyers: Congrats to **Cablefax's** inaugural class of Top Lawyers, representing the top legal minds in communications. There were moments of levity during the Top Lawyers dinner at the National Press Club Wednesday night as honorees recounted their favorite fictional lawyers. *Vincent LaGuardia Gambini*, depicted by *Joe Pesci* in "My Cousin Vinny," was a crowd favorite, in part for his determination. It did take him six attempts to pass the bar after all. **EchoStar** regulatory affairs svp *Jennifer Manner* impressed the crowd with perhaps the most obscure fictional lawyer reference of the night, *Fred Gailey*— the lawyer who proved Santa Claus was real in "Miracle on 34th Street." Check out more dinner highlights at Cablefax.com, including some highlights from guest speaker/author/former **CNN** anchor *Frank Sesno*.

Obituary: *Harvey Boyd*, a longtime operations exec with **Capitol Cities** and **Post Newsweek Cable** (now **Cable One**), passed away last week. He most recently was pres/CEO of Western Broadband in Phoenix, AZ, but was retired at the time of his death.


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