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What the Industry Reads First

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## Inside the Beltway: ZEE TV Not Afraid to Talk Politics

When it comes to today's highly charged political climate, many are treading carefully. But Indian cable and satellite TV channel **ZEE TV** hasn't been afraid to jump into political waters. During the US presidential campaign, the network produced and developed the overall strategy behind pro-*Trump* ads that were paid for by the **Republican Hindu Coalition**. Just this past Thursday, the network held an event in DC in honor of Republican **FCC** chairman *Ajit Pai*, one day after protests of his Internet policies. ZEE's parent company bestowed the first **ZEE Entertainment** National Leadership Award on Pai, the first Indian American to hold the office. About 200 people were in attendance, including members of Congress. The award was presented by *Amit Goenka*, CEO of international business for ZEE Entertainment and son of company chairman *Subhash Chandra*. "As a global leader in enriching lives and promoting cross-cultural harmony and understanding, ZEE Entertainment is launching an annual program to identify and honor individuals and organizations who are outstanding leaders themselves," said *Sameer Targe*, CEO of ZEE TV Americas. "The selection of our inaugural honoree was not difficult, and we are proud to confer it on FCC Chairman Ajit Pai for making great strides in promoting excellence in public communications, advancing free market solutions, and encouraging creativity, integrity and growth." Pai, however, has been at the heart of protests from those upset with his proposal to dismantle elements of the FCC's 2015 Open Internet rules. Dealing with controversy isn't new for ZEE, which created the "Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar" (This Time, A Trump Government) ad campaign last year. Five related ads aired 30 times a day for two months across its US networks, including **Zee TV** and health & wellness network **Z Living**. ZEE Entertainment is the largest producer and aggregator of Hindi programming in the world, and as such has a unique window into the homes of many Indian Americans. It programs 25 channels in the US in various Indian languages, as well as Spanish-language Bollywood channel **Zee Mundo**. "The Republicans were smart enough to understand [Indian Americans'] influence of the larger canvas," Targe said, even though the demo has traditionally identified as Democrats. Efforts included a ZEE and RHC-organized Bollywood gala in NJ that was keynoted by Trump, who endorsed India Prime Minister *Narendra Modi's* economic model (The two met for the first time two weeks ago in DC). ZEE believes it helped move the needle, though data from the **National Asian American Survey** post-election shows about 16% of Indian Ameri-



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cans voted for Trump, in line with the number that voted for *Mitt Romney* in 2012. One thing's clear, the campaign was definitely noticed. Not only were there several stories in the press about the initiative, Targe said a ZEE TV-produced ad filmed during the event in NJ was viewed on TV or social media by 87% of Hindu American voters.

**Viacom and Perry Partner Up:** **Viacom** and *Tyler Perry* are joining together in a multi-year content partnership. Through the exclusive agreement, Perry will produce around 90 episodes of original drama and comedy series annually for **BET** and other Viacom networks, with Viacom retaining all licensing rights. The deal also encompasses short-form video and film, with **Paramount Pictures** having "first look" rights on any new Perry-created concepts. The film agreement begins immediately, while the partnership on Perry's TV and short-form content will go into effect following the expiration of Perry's current exclusive contract with **OWN**. The TV deal lasts through 2024. The OWN pact runs through May 2019, with series airing on the network through 2020. "At the end of the exclusive relationship, OWN and Tyler Perry have the option to work together on a non-exclusive basis," OWN said Friday. Perry and the Oprah-owned network originally partnered in October 2012, with Perry taking a small equity stake in OWN. He currently serves as the executive producer on four OWN series, including "The Haves and Have Nots," "If Loving You Is Wrong," "For Better or Worse" and "Love Thy Neighbor."

**Repack Costs:** The **FCC** on Friday threw out a figure of \$2,115,328,744.33 as the preliminary estimated costs associated with the new channel assignments from the broadcast incentive auction. The figure is based on estimates received by reimbursement-eligible TV stations and MVPDs. The Commission expects to receive additional estimates from MVPDs and a "small number" of stations. The amount is more than the \$1.75bn Congress set aside to reimburse entities. However, the FCC notice said the amount will change and is subject to careful review, so stay tuned...

**IPO Alert:** The *WSJ* reports that **Roku** is readying an IPO that it expects to launch before year-end, citing people familiar with the company's plans. It could file in the coming weeks and raise as much as \$1bn.

**MASN-Nats Spat:** The **NY Supreme Court's** Appellate Division in a 3-2 vote Thursday remanded **MASN's** long-running dispute over how much it owes the Washington Nationals for the rights to the **MLB** team's games. The ruling means the dispute heads to a MLB arbitration panel. This has been going on for years, with a 2014 baseball arbitration panel recommending MASN pay \$298mln for the rights. However, a judge threw that decision out in 2015, and the appeals court unanimously affirmed that decision.

**Obituary:** **BendBroadband** founder *Don Tykeson* passed away on Wednesday at the age of 90. His professional career included acquiring a minority interest in 1963 in **Liberty Broadcasting**, building it into a top-20 player by 1983 when it was sold to **TCI**. His daughter, *Amy Tykeson*, left **HBO** to join him on the cable operator side in 1988. She served as president/CEO of BendBroadband when it was sold in 2014. Many times over the years, Amy Tykeson has pointed to her father as her mentor. She and her sister *Ellen Tykeson* told Eugene, Oregon's *The Register-Guard* that their father had given away tens of millions of dollars over the years to organizations involved in education, science, health and the arts. "He was big-hearted man who was committed to making a difference," Amy told the paper. Don Tykeson's cable history included serving as a founding director of **C-SPAN**. "From our earliest days, Don Tykeson, one of our original board members starting in 1978, was an enthusiastic supporter of C-SPAN. He passed that on to his daughter Amy who eventually also served as a terrific presence on the C-SPAN Board. Don was civic-minded...just a fine person...a true gentleman," C-SPAN's *Brian Lamb* said. A public memorial service is being planned for July 22.

**Ratings:** **YES** is averaging 343K viewers for Yankees games through the first half of the **MLB** season, a 57% YOY increase. In addition, it's the net's best first-half viewership figure since 2012. Rookie phenom *Aaron Judge*, who leads the league with 30 HRs, is a big reason for the increased interest. The net reports digital videos of Judge alone have garnered more than 6mln views in the past three months.

**Blog Notes:** Lots of SVOD services are launching these days. One thing they have to keep in mind is creating experience parity across devices. **TCM** vp of digital activation *Richard Steiner* gets into that in a [Turner blog on SVOD](#) offering **Film-Struck**. "We do gain efficiencies from our **You.i Engine** codebase, but there's always going to be 10-20% or so that needs to be adjusted to make sure each platform is a great experience for the user," he says. "For Roku, we also needed to consider performance implications. We were able to leverage the 86KB footprint of a You.i Engine app on Roku and pull in Scene-Graph elements and assets on run time to get people into the viewing experience faster and deliver fast page load times."



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