

Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — December 11, 2018

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 29 / No. 236

Retrans Plan: NAB, NCTA Reach Election Selection Compromise

Those wishing for retransmission consent reform may find a little something in their stockings this year... even if it's not the big gift they wanted. FCC chmn *Ajit Pai's* efforts to modernize media regulations include a push to revise how broadcast stations provide cable ops notice of their must carry or retrans consent elections. Under current rules, every station must provide notice every three years via certified mail to each cable system and DBS provider in its market as to which they are choosing. Some have argued the process is antiquated, with **Minority TV Project** filing a complaint after **DISH** rejected its must carry request because it didn't file it via certified mail. The FCC rejected the broadcaster's complaint. The FCC has sought comment on allowing election carriage notices to be handled online, but both broadcasters and cablers worried that things could fall through the cracks. Now, **NCTA** and **NAB** are jointly proposing a process they want the FCC to approve. The gist is that broadcasters don't have to send new election notices to cable ops every election cycle unless they want to change their current status. If a station elected must-carry previously, the assumption is that it will do so again, thus saving everyone a lot of paperwork. For those stations changing things up, the broadcaster would send notice to an email address listed in the cable operator's online public file or in the FCC's Cable Operations and Licensing System (COALS) database, for cable operators that do not have an online public file. The new framework would take effect in the 2020 election cycle, with stations only notifying operators if they are changing their carriage election. A key concern is ensuring confirmation of receipt of carriage election changes. Thus, NAB and NCTA propose broadcasters will cc an FCC email address to show they completed proper notice, though stations wouldn't be able to use the FCC email address in lieu of sending notification to an operator. Additionally, they propose that a cable op's email generate a response to the broadcaster so it knows its election notice was received. "We believe the compromise detailed above will reduce burdens and provide certainty in the carriage election and notification processes and urge the Commission to adopt it," the two trade associations said in a filing with the Commission.

CRA Defeat: The net neutrality CRA is dead for now as supporters failed to obtain the required number of signatures for a vote by the Dec 10 deadline. A last ditch effort to pressure the 18 House Democrats that had yet to sign the CRA proved unsuccessful. Even if it had, more than 20 House Republicans would also have had to jump onboard the band-

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wagon in order for the vote to be brought up. No further action can be taken for the rest of the month, but that doesn't mean it won't be coming up again in 2019. The CRA action could be revived, but the course of action will be slightly different. All of the expedited procedural mechanisms used in 2018, including those that allowed a minority in the Senate to bring up the CRA this year, would no longer be applicable. While the CRA is in something of a winter hibernation period, those who supported it aren't taking a similar break. Some continue to argue for Congress to adopt bipartisan open internet legislation. "Congress should take this opportunity to enact bipartisan legislation that will remove this issue from politics, designate broadband as a Title I information service, enshrine in law the core principles of an open Internet—no blocking of legitimate online content, no throttling based on content or unfair discrimination against content—and add robust consumer privacy protections that apply to all companies equally, so that consumers have one set of privacy protections everywhere on the Internet and no matter how they access the Internet," **Internet Innovation Alliance** co-chairs *Rick Boucher, Kim Keenan and Bruce Mehlman* said in a statement.

5G Diet: Verizon announced in a blog post Monday that approximately 10,400 employees have been accepted into a voluntary buyout program. The move comes soon after Verizon revamped its organizational structure to prepare for commercial 5G. Verizon CEO *Hans Vestberg* said the changes would be seamless to customers. "This is a moment in time, given our financial and operational strength, to begin to better serve customers with more agility, speed and flexibility," Vestberg said. The voluntary program offered up to 60 weeks' salary, bonus and benefits depending on the employee's length of service. Employees were notified Monday whether they were accepted into the program and their last date on payroll. That date could have been year-end 2018, the end of March or June depending on business needs. "For those who were accepted, the coming weeks and months will be a transition," Vestberg said in a letter to employees. "For the entire V Team, there will be opportunities to work differently as we prepare for the great things to come at Verizon. Together, we are leading the world during this great technological revolution, and we will continue to lead the way." The company totaled 152,300 employees at the end of 3Q18.

Bringing Back the BDAC: The FCC plans to re-charter its Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, which is tasked with coming up with ways the Commission can help accelerate the deployment of high-speed internet access. Nominations for membership to BDAC are due to the FCC by Jan 10.

Home Run: MLB Network will kick off its 10-year anniversary on Jan 1 with a year-long celebration. The net plans to re-air its original debut programming, including *Don Larsen's* perfect game in Game 5 of the 1956 World Series and its Jan 2009 interview with Larsen, *Yogi Berra* and *Bob Costas*. At 6pm on Jan 1, exactly 10 years to the minute

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when the net first came on the air, “MLB Network: 10 years and counting” will kick off. It will look back at the net’s beginnings and memorable moments and stories. MLB Network will promote to produce anniversary-themed content on-air and on social media throughout the year, including countdown shows, vignettes with personalities and flash-backs from the last decade.

Monkey Business: **CNBC** and **SurveyMonkey** released the results of their small business survey, with those who said conditions for businesses are currently “good” fell from 58% to 55%. The decline came after 5 straight quarters of gains. The companies surveyed more than 2K small business owners, and the survey found the dip reflected across nearly all demographic groups with the exception of Democrats and those who disapprove of President Trump. In addition, 58% of small business owners expect their revenue to increase over the next 12 months, down from 62% in Q3 and 60% in Q2. Nearly 20% of owners think the most important priority for the next Congress should be to cut spending/reduce the deficit, followed by immigration at 18% and increased oversight of the Trump administration at 15%.

Changing Landscape: **Horowitz Research** found that Asian American viewers are largely leading the change in TV viewing habits. The “FOCUS Asian: The Media Landscape 2018” report discovered that 75% of Asian TV content viewers stream at least some of their content, compared to 68% of total market. On average, Asian viewers spend 44% of their time streaming and 38% of time on live TV. This compares to overall TV viewers who spend 35% of time streaming and 43% to live TV.

Order in the Court: **Katz Networks** is relaunching **Court TV**, a network devoted to live coverage and expert analysis of the nation’s most important trials. The new Court TV will relaunch in May and run 24/7, with original Court TV anchor *Vinnie Politan* returning as lead anchor and former Court TV and **CNN** producers *John Alleva* and *Scott Tufts* joining as VPs and managing editors. Katz has also acquired Court TV’s intellectual property, including the trademark, website and the complete original 100K-hour Court TV library from **Turner Broadcasting**. The revamped Court TV has also scored over-the-air distribution agreements with major local TV group owners including **Tribune**, **Scrrips** and **Univision**, allowing it to reach more than 50% of US TV households at launch. Court TV was founded in 1991, but was transformed in 2007 to **truTV**.

Season of Streaming: **Roku** is kicking off the company’s first ever Stream-a-thon on Dec 26, allowing viewers to watch a selection of premium shows for free. Complete seasons of series and movies from networks like **Acorn TV**, **Discovery Channel**, **NBC** and **EPIX** will be available within Featured Free, a section of the Roku home screen. The streaming event will run through Jan 1.

Programming: **Cheddar** is premiering a weekly series dedicated to the intersection of technology and smart living Tuesday at 5pm. “Cheddar @ Home” will showcase how smart technology can meet the needs of folks living in spaces from dorm rooms to large homes. -- A **CNN** original series “American Style” will premiere Jan 13 with back-to-back episodes at 9pm. The four-part docuseries dives into America’s changing style and its relationship to political, social and economic climates of the time. -- **TBS** picked up “Strange Times,” a series about five teenage skateboarders who solve paranormal mysteries, based on *Tom DeLonge’s* graphic novel. -- **Travel Channel** will ring in 2019 with a “Ghost Adventures” marathon starting Dec 31 at 8am, before the premiere of “Demon House” on Jan 1 at 9pm. Immediately following the film’s debut, the net will premiere one-hour special “Demon House: Lost Footage.” -- **HBO Sports** will dive into the world of surfing in the 1990s with the premiere of “Momentum Generation” Tuesday at 10pm. -- **Netflix** acquired “Fyre,” a documentary from *Chris Smith* chronicling the breakdown of the Fyre music festival. The Netflix original will be released globally on Jan 18.

People: **SCTE** promoted a trio of execs as it looks to boost capabilities in such areas as marketing and events, membership, and learning and development and prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary. *Zenita Henderson* was elevated to vp, marketing and business development, with responsibility for all marketing and communications activities, as well as overall responsibility for the planning of **SCTE-ISBE Cable-Tec Expo**. *Robin Fenton* moved up to vp, membership & learning operations, overseeing membership and chapter activity as well as new management development and implementation training and certification programs. Also upped was *Steve Harris*, who will work with Fenton on content development as executive director, technical sales, learning & development. -- **GCI** upped *Heather Handyside* to vp, corporate communications and community engagement. -- **A+E Networks** promoted *Steve Ascher* to svp, production & development of A+E Originals. He was named vp for the department in Dec 2017, and previously worked for **NBC News**. -- **VidCon** hired *Sarah Tortoreti* as vp of marketing. She comes over to the newly created role from **Nickelodeon** where she served as director of marketing and brand strategy.

CFX TECH

On the Precipice of Change

As the year comes to the end and the industry begins to take a look back on the past 12 months, it can only be characterized as a time of change. Moving into the era of smart cities and 5G, the networks and frames that allow for tech's continual advancement have become more important than ever. That includes AI, and the next few years could prove to be transformational in the world of machine learning.

At the **FCC's** Forum on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning on Nov 30, **Nokia** lab leader *Chris White* compared the advancement of AI to the introduction and adoption of computer systems.

"I think it has the same kind of potential to revolutionize the world that we're in," White said. His team is currently focused in developing and improving "invisible AI" that operates to solve problems before a human will even notice it as well as the tech that requires further interaction. White equated this stage of the internet's development to that of the black-and-white era of television and suggested that the world could be moving into the "color TV" stage of the internet within 10 years.

CTA senior manager of government affairs *Michael Hayes* said that many of the discussions surrounding the issues with AI today rely on severe hypotheticals often based in science fiction. While he wouldn't discourage anyone from reading science fiction, when it comes to policy, there need to be real discussions about how AI would be applied to regular lives today.

Hayes pointed to a recent study from the **McKinsey Global Institute** on [AI for social good](#), which found that even in situations where a human may be able to perform a task with greater accuracy than an AI tool could, the speed of "good enough" systems could have massive impact in areas such as education and security and justice. Think of a tool that sends automated answers to questions that citizens ask through an email. In other cases, AI would

best humans by a mile. AI could monitor the outbreak of disease by analyzing tweets in multiple languages. It's for those reasons that policy needs to be flexible and adaptive to the different applications of AI.

Georgetown University Medical Center chief data scientist *Subha Madhavan* spoke to AI's intersection with the world of telehealth and diagnostics. While some may think that advances in AI would spell doom for radiologists, Madhavan would beg to differ. "I don't think it's the doctors that are going to lose their jobs. It's actually the doctors who don't adopt AI that are going to lose their jobs," Madhavan said. She said it's vital that humans remain part of the equation, discussing a case where an AI had detected a lesion in a breast cancer patient, but it took a radiologist and oncologist to detect additional lesions that the AI had not. The main issue now is that many aren't trained in the data and methodologies behind AI and its applications.

Frame.IO head of data *Matthew Ruttle* agreed, saying that this was a greater issue even just three years ago. Now that shared libraries and resources are being developed for AI, he believes it will only become easier and easier for a standard software developer to begin implementing change. For **Qualcomm** senior director of engineering *Yongbin Wei*, AI is just another tool to get the job done. Looking at the commercial 5G rollouts coming in 2019, Wei said machine learning and AI will play a huge factor in how the performance efficiency of a 5G network can be improved. Qualcomm has also been investigating how to use unlicensed spectrum more efficiently.

The panelists differed in their exact uses for AI, but each urged greater discussion between government and industry and the implementation of standards within each industry to encourage continued growth and adoption. --
Sara Winegardner

Editor's Note: The first deadline may have passed, but it's not too late to enter the **Cablefax Digital & Tech Awards!** Submit your most engaging, interactive and creative digital content and tech by Dec 14 to be considered.

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