

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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STELAR Alert: Senators Push AT&T-DirecTV on Local into Locals

DISH carries local broadcast signals in all 210 media markets, and some lawmakers think it's time AT&T-DirecTV does the same. Senators *Jon Tester* (D-MT), *Michael Enzi* (R-WY), *Michael Bennet* (D-CO) and *John Barrasso* (R-WY) wrote to AT&T Communications CEO *John Donovan* Thursday, expressing concern that 12 of America's smallest media markets don't have local-into-locals from DirecTV. Those include markets such as Helena, MT, and Grand Junction, CO. "Despite technological advances that allow satellite companies to serve local channels into local markets in any location, the customers in these 12 media markets still receive limited or no access to locally broadcasted network stations through their subscriptions," they wrote, noting that folks living in remote areas are often receiving distant signals from places like NYC or L.A. "We acknowledge that the distant signal provisions in current law allows this, however, we do not see why AT&T-DirecTV could not work to minimize the distance and provide local news from within the subscriber's region." It's probably no coincidence that this letter comes as Congress gets ready to review of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act, which expires at the end of the year. Among other things, the expiring legislation grants a compulsory copyright license to DISH and DirecTV to retransmit distant broadcast signals. AT&T could not be reached immediately for comment Thursday. Providing local into locals has been a hot potato for the satellite companies for many years, with broadcasters pushing it as a condition of AT&T's purchase of DirecTV in 2015. DISH hit the 210 market milestone in 2010. DirecTV was talking about doing the same back in 2003. In fact, the FCC's 2003 order approving News Corp's acquisition of DirecTV contains the following language: "Applicants stated that, 'as early as 2006 and no later than 2008, (1) DirecTV will offer a seamless, integrated local channel package in all 210 DMAs, and (2) DirecTV will offer at least 200 to 300 channels of local and national HDTV programming.'" With so much attention on the broadband gap in rural America these days, it'll be interesting to see if this rural broadcast issue can gather some momentum this year. "Without access to local broadcasting, your subscribers in these situations miss vital information on public safety, weather, elections and opportunities for community engagement. This is unacceptable and a practice that must be ended as we work to close the digital divide," the senators concluded.

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Lawsuit Pause: All eyes continue to be on the DC Circuit, with Vermont, the **Dept of Justice** and groups representing ISPs agreeing to delay federal court litigation against Vermont's net neutrality bill while the DC court considers a petition for review of the **FCC** order removing Title II regulation. Vermont also agreed not to enforce its net neutrality statute or executive order until the case is resolved. California agreed to a similar pause in October. The US District Court for Vermont will have to approve the proposed order. "Vermont's decision not to enforce its statute and executive order regulating the internet while the DC Circuit reviews the FCC's 2017 Restoring Internet Freedom Order is a win for consumers that will allow continued innovation and investment while these deliberations continue. Our companies support an open internet, and we urge Congress to resolve this issue by passing a national framework to protect that principle for all Americans," **ACA, CTIA, NCTA** and **USTelecom** said in a statement. The DC Circuit heard oral arguments last month on the FCC's order, which rolled back 2015 net neutrality rules. Vermont's bill was signed by *Gov Phil Scott* (R) in May, with NCTA, ACA and the others filing suit in October. It requires ISPs to certify compliance with net neutrality standards to receive a govt contract and has the state attorney general review network management practices to ensure ISPs are in compliance with 2015 FCC net neutrality rules. Thirty-four states and DC introduced 120 bills and resolutions regarding net neutrality in the 2018 legislative session, with five states—California, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont and Washington—enacting legislation or adopted resolutions, according to the **National Conference of State Legislatures**.

5G Auction: Despite possible interference concerns from some lawmakers, the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** and **NASA**, the **FCC's** 24GHz auction got underway Thursday. Up for grabs are some 2909 licenses in the 24 GHz band. Two rounds took place on Thursday, with the FCC's website putting the gross proceeds as of Round 2 at \$304,359,080. The largest posted prices were in NY (\$5.047mln) and L.A. (\$3.882mln). Three rounds are set to begin Friday at 10am ET. The FCC has identified 38 qualified bidders in the auction, including **AT&T, Verizon** and **T-Mobile**. **Cox Communications** had applied to participate, but was not named a qualified bidder.

Admissions Scam: **Hallmark Channel** parent **Crown Media Family Networks** said it has stopped all productions involving actress *Lori Loughlin*, who was charged in a college admissions scandal. That includes **Hallmark Movie & Mysteries'** "Garage Sale Mysteries," an independent third party production.

In or Out: Analysts are torn over what to do with **Roku**. The stock plummeted 14 points Wednesday after two analysts decided to downgrade it as new entrants like **WarnerMedia** and **Disney** are preparing to enter the streaming market by the end of 2019. Meanwhile, **Needham** is calling Roku its top pick of 2019, even raising its price target

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from \$65 to \$85. Needham points to its status as an aggregator as a huge positive, stating that new services will have to sign contracts with Roku if they want to be viewed by Roku's 27mln OTT users. Needham also sees the new streamers beginning to "advertise on Roku's home page as a high ROI way to drive awareness and adoption by OTT users of their new streaming service." Roku shares closed up 1.78% Thursday.

Disruption Instructions: Espial released a vision paper Thursday that's designed to give operators more ways to disrupt in the digital transformation of pay TV. Titled "Digital Transformation, The New Imperatives for Operators," the paper discourages folks from de-emphasizing video in order to survive. "If we take a closer look, we see that the market for video is not contracting at all. Rather, it is growing and represents a vast opportunity for operators," Espial vp, product management *Michael McCluskey* said. "But operators can't take advantage of this opportunity by doing more of what they do today." The paper offers advice on how to slow the rates of churn and cordshaving as well as how they can transform how they're reaching customers. Vertical opportunities that could drive new revenues for operators are spotlighted, including those for advertising, hospitals, MDUs and content owners. Much of those vertical opportunities also require some investment in new data tools that grant deeper insights into how customers think. Espial director, demand generation and marketing *Dipalli Bhatt* referenced a December study from **Hulu** that argued viewers don't actually mind advertisements as long as they are relevant. "There is a reason why digital advertisements are doing well and why people are making their advertisements look more like content. They are bringing in money, the people are buying into them," Bhatt said. "It's just that they have to be relevant, and how do you know they are relevant? You have to have a platform or some kind of technology that helps you gain that knowledge of consumer behavior."

OTT Fare: SVOD service **CuriosityStream** isn't just for mom and dad. The streamer has acquired children's properties from **Litton Entertainment**, and plans to further expand content for the younger set. The just-announced deal with Litton Entertainment will bring "Jack Hanna's Wild Countdown," "Ocean Mysteries with Jeff Corwin," "Innovation Nation" and "Rock the Park" (a 2018 **Cablefax Program Awards** winner) to the service next month, with multiple seasons available. -- **Tubi** has accepted a rose from **Warner Bros**, entering a content deal that will bring select seasons of "The Bachelor" to the AVOD service. The deal includes the first seasons of The Bachelor and "The Bachelorette," "The Bachelorette: Trista & Ryan's Wedding" and the fifth season of "Bachelor in Paradise." Episodes will become available on Tubi starting April 1.

Paving the Way: **CableLabs** is adding to its Point-to-Point Coherent optics specifications with the Physical Layer 2.0 specification. The addition defines interoperable P2P coherent optics links running at 200 Gbps on a single wavelength. The PHYv2.0 specification comes just 9 months after PHYv1.0 was released, defining operation at 100 Gbps on a single wavelength. It's designed to leverage emerging devices anticipated to arrive by 2020 that will double the capacity of the cable access network, consume less power and lower the cost per bit delivered.

CTAM Doings: Busy time over at marketing group **CTAM**. The board extended the contract of pres/CEO *Vicki Lins* for three additional years, and **Comcast** evp, CMO *Rick Lang* was elected to serve a two-year terms as board chair. New members of the board include **Rogers** residential pres *Phil Hartling* and **AMC Networks'** distribution, content partnerships svp *Josh Reader*. CTAM's also getting ready to say goodbye to svp, chief communications officer *Anne Cowan*, who is retiring after 20 years with the group. An intimate surprise party was held in Philly for Cowan Wednesday, ahead of the latest CTAM Think event. The night at Philly's Pyramid Club featured several dozen friends, including former CTAM bosses *Char Beales* and *John Lansing*, as well as video tributes to Cowan from a slew of current and former industry execs. Check out coverage of the night [here](#), and decide for yourself—is Anne Cowan really the Nicest Gal in Cable?

Basketball Season: **DirecTV** is bringing up to 13 **NCAA** March Madness games to 4K HDR. Running from March 19-30, the games will cover everything from the first four through the Elite 8.

Down South: The Highlands residential subdivision in southern Mississippi is the first community in the area to receive **C Spire's** FTTH Gigabit speed broadband internet, live streaming TV and digital home phone service. C Spire's next-gen solution is now available in 13 markets across the state.

Bright and Early: **Univision** is launching three new morning newscasts in Dallas ("Primera Edición DFW"), Houston ("Noticias 45 Primera Hora"), San Antonio and Austin ("Primera Hora Texas Central"). Each newscast will air from 5-7am. For those markets, the three programs will mark the first time that local Spanish-language morning newscasts will air.

On the Circuit: There's a mixer in DC Monday to celebrate women leaders at the **FCC** (fun fact: the Media Bureau's chief, deputy chief, and three associate chiefs are all female). It's supported by the **Alliance for Women in Media**. For more info, contact *Ellen Schned* at el.schned@gmail.com.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE


Pretty, Perfect Prevaricators

The *Pretty Little Liars* are back, well, at least two of them. Alison DiLaurentis (*Sasha Pieterse*) and Mona Vanderwaal (*Janel Parrish*) from **Freeform's** long-running teen drama have signed up for new iteration "Pretty Little Liars: The Perfectionists" (debuts Wednesday, 8pm). Alison is a college T.A., who Mona helped hire. While there's a murder and a new cast that includes *Sofia Carson* ("Descendants"), fans of the show have to wonder if the original series' two biggest pot stirrers will be up to their old hijinks or serve as more mature, authority figures. "It's a little of both. They are who they are," ep *Marlene King* tells us. "Mona and Alison have been frenemies. They're going to learn whether they can or cannot trust one another in this brave new world." *Perfectionists* takes place about two years after the finale of PLL, with Mona and Alison living across the country in the Pacific Northwest and working at the high pressure fictional college Beacon Heights. And since this is a PLL series, you can bet your Nancy Drew books that there's a mystery to solve before the pilot comes to an end. "People love a good page turner. You can't wait to pick up the next, and it was always our goal to leave each episode on a cliffhanger to keep you coming back for more," King says. As with the original, *Perfectionists* is based on a *Sara Shepard* book series, but King says twists in the books would have been impossible to pull off believably on TV, so there are some creative liberties. While Pieterse and Parrish are the only two members of the original cast to return, it sounds like the door's open for possible cameos from other stars. As always, PLL viewers should keep their eyes peeled for clues throughout the show and hidden gems for OG fans. "There are a lot of fun little *Pretty Little Liars* Easter eggs in there. Some fans have noticed that the funeral scene in a lot of ways is shot for shot the Alison DiLaurentis funeral scene," King says. "There are clues along the way. You have to pay attention when you watch an episode of *Pretty Little Liars* if you want to connect the dots. But you have to find the dots first." — *Amy Maclean*

Reviews: "Desus & Mero," 11pm ET, Thursdays, **Showtime**. A lot of shows similar to this have failed for a variety of reasons. Get a pair of funny people together, let them riff on topics of the day, ranging from politics to celebrities to sports, and then have them interact with A- and B-list guests. Seems simple. It's not. Fortunately *Desus Nice* and *The Kid Mero* make it look easy. Perhaps the secret is they have chemistry from their popular podcast, "Bodega Boys," or that they're just not taking things too seriously. More than that, the camera and live audience seem to bother them very little. Surely they don't inhibit their delivery (which is raucous) or language (saying it's blue is an understatement). This is a late-night show devoid of pretension. It's also a relaxing hoot. — "Manhunt," **Acorn TV**. On the face of it, it's just another police procedural. Ah, but it's far more. First, the case—the murder of a French national—is situated in London, so that city's police department handles the investigation. Next, the detective chief inspector is *Colin Sutton* (whose memoirs are the source of this story). Finally, but not least, *Martin Clunes* plays DCI Sutton as an ordinary man with tremendous determination to crack the case. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (3/4/19-3/10/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.741	2,264"
MSNBC	0.627	1,915"
HGTV	0.436	1,332"
ESPN	0.417	1,273"
USA	0.407	1,243"
HIST	0.395	1,206"
DISC	0.385	1,175"
TLC	0.342	1,044"
A&E	0.338	1,033"
TNT	0.336	1,026"
TBSC	0.329	1,005"
ID	0.315	962
HALL	0.310	947
FOOD	0.291	888
CNN	0.281	860
NICK	0.276	843
SYFY	0.245	749
BRAVO	0.239	729
AMC	0.223	681
FX	0.217	663
TVLAND	0.213	652
ADSM	0.208	635
INSP	0.203	621
HMM	0.194	592
NAN	0.191	584
DSNY	0.166	507
HBO	0.166	506
WETV	0.161	492
TRAVEL	0.161	492
LIFE	0.158	482
DSJR	0.157	480
APL	0.156	476
MTV	0.154	471
PARA	0.152	463
NATGEO	0.150	457
NKJR	0.141	429
VH1	0.137	418
GSN	0.136	415
COM	0.126	386
CRN	0.120	367
OWN	0.119	363

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.



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