

# Cablefax Daily™

Thursday — May 23, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

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## LIFT America: House Commerce Talks Broadband Mapping, Minimum Speeds

House Commerce spent Wednesday hashing out the **LIFT America Act**, a bill aiming to expand access to broadband, modernize the electric grid and protect the environment in one fell swoop. LIFT would dedicate \$40 billion over five years to close the digital divide and create a secure, resilient broadband network. But before any funds can be distributed as part of LIFT, bipartisan members of House Commerce agreed that the **FCC's** current broadband coverage maps, created using FCC Form 477, need an overhaul. Action is already being taken to clean them up. Since it was introduced last week, *Sen Shelley Moore Capito's* (R-WV) Broadband Data Improvement Act has seen bipartisan support as well as backing from the industry, including **Charter**, **NCTA** and the **Competitive Carriers Association**. *Rep Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA) is planning on introducing the House companion bill in the coming weeks. **American Enterprise Institute** visiting fellow *Daniel Lyons* told House Commerce that more partnerships like that between **WISPA** and **USTelecom** could offer the FCC more accurate data on underserved areas and improved methods on gathering that data. Also on hand to testify was former FCC commish *Mignon Clyburn*, who offered her support to a challenge process for broadband mapping that's simple for consumers to engage in. And while everyone could get behind the need for better broadband access, the same could not be said for the minimum speeds to be required by the LIFT America Act. Clyburn advocated for a minimum download speed of 100Mbps rather than minimum 25/3Mbps benchmark for any projects funded by the legislation. Lyons instead backed a 25Mbps floor, saying that instead of looking to what technologies will need to be supported further down the line, Congress should prioritize meeting rural broadband needs first. "The problem with a minimum speed requirement is you disqualify any technology that can't meet that speed, which limits the number of bidders available and therefore limits the areas you can serve and how cost-efficiently you can do so," Lyons said, adding that he would support the 100Mbps mark if it was justified. "If the proper amount is something less than that, then it doesn't make sense to me to eliminate potential bidders who can provide service in rural areas to connect unconnected communities." For Clyburn, maintaining a 100Mbps minimum is all about that tech-centric future and the need to stay competitive on the global stage. "I say we go big," Clyburn said. "We need to do this one time, and if you want to do this one time, you need to future-proof it. And to future-proof it,

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**Dana Strong, Comcast Cable**
- Creative Thinking  
**Charter Communications**
- Evolution Award  
**RCN/Grande/Wave Executive Team**
- Customer Service Award  
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## Top Ops Celebration Dinner June 6th

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you need to look to the future and look to your international competitors in terms of what they're doing. There's no one internationally that we are observing and following that's doing anything less than 100Mbps." Of course, it wouldn't be a hearing involving broadband without talk of 5G and how to eliminate barriers to its widespread deployment. Tension came in deciding which barriers should remain in place. *Jessica Eckdish*, legislative director for **BlueGreen Alliance**—a nonprofit looking to solve environmental challenges while maintaining quality jobs and a strong economy—called for the repeal of the FCC's small cell order, effectively restoring the ability of local governments to regulate small cell deployment in their communities. Lyons countered, saying that 5G deployment is far less intrusive than that of 4G or 3G. "When you're talking about whether you're going to put a large tower in a town that you can see from several miles away, having significant local input makes a lot of sense," Lyons said. "When you're talking about little pizza box-sized spaces all around town, it's a different impact. The tradeoff between how much we should give local authority and how much we should be expediting the buildout of infrastructure... the calculus changes a little bit."

**Good While It Lasted:** The merger between **T-Mobile** and **Sprint** is far from in the clear with the DOJ antitrust staff recommending that the agency block the \$26bln deal, [according to Reuters](#). The recommendation comes just two days after **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* voiced his support of the deal with concessions, including the divestiture of **Boost Mobile**. While **New Street** initially saw the FCC support as a friendly move towards antitrust chief *Makan Delrahim* to give him cover to approve the deal despite staff opposition, that view was much different by day's end. "The evidence suggests to us that the decision to announce early was part of a strategy to persuade Delrahim to approve the deal, with the policy/political messages being far more important than any messages about competition analysis," New Street analyst *Blair Levin* said in a research note. "By the end of the day, we saw signs that Delrahim neither agreed with the FCC analysis nor was happy about the box the FCC had put him in." If Delrahim shares his staff's opinion and is not satisfied with the deal as-is, the DOJ could either sue to block the deal or look to place more concessions on the deal to satisfy any antitrust concerns. **Public Knowledge** quickly came forward to back the reported recommendation from DOJ staff. "The standards of review for mergers under the antitrust laws and the Communications Act are very different, but the FCC traditionally incorporates competition analysis into its merger review," Public Knowledge senior policy counsel *Phillip Berenbroick* said in a statement. "However, the FCC's proposed behavioral conditions do nothing to remedy the dramatic harms to consumers and competition that would result from allowing the wireless market to consolidate down to only three nationwide carriers."

**Comcast Solutions:** **Comcast Technology Solutions** launched a comprehensive global ad management solution that connects the media plan to the entire creative workflow. It includes a suite of services capable of automating the



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manual process of matching creative to media buys, managing traffic and delivery, creative versioning and reporting across all channels. Comcast is also collaborating with **Peach**, a global video advertising distribution company which operates in 100 countries, allowing the solution to be available outside the US across international markets.

**Roku Ads:** Roku introduced a new analytics and planning tool for OTT advertisers. Activation Insights combines a comprehensive review of a brand's linear TV campaign performance with analysis of the potential OTT audience missed. The tool is part of Roku Ad Insights Suite, which allows brands to measure campaign reach and effectiveness across linear TV and OTT. According to **Magna Global**, OTT accounts for 29% of TV viewing but so far has only captured 3% of TV ad budgets.

**Broadband Growth:** In 1Q19, overall average monthly broadband usage reached a new high, up to 273.5GB. That was driven in part by the rise in internet-only subs and an increasing number of "power users," according to a report from **OpenVault**. This is up 27% YOY from an average of 215.4GB. This quarter, internet-only subs consumed 395.7GB, 120GB more than the average sub and almost double the 209.5GB consumed by households that have a bundle of video and internet services. Power users (subs who consume 1TB or more of data per month) doubled to 4.2% of all subs and account for 6.5% of all internet-only subs.

**Chicago Whaddya Say:** **Sinclair** is gearing up for the launch of upcoming regional sports network **Marquee Sports Network** with the appointment of *Michael McCarthy* as gm. McCarthy is the former pres of **MSG Network** and led revenue and content across all platforms, winning over 75 Emmys. McCarthy has a background in sports, having previously served as vice chmn and CEO of the **St. Louis Blues** and COO of the **Milwaukee Bucks**. He knows the **Chicago Cubs** well, having served as a consultant for the team during the formation of the RSN's launch strategy. The RSN is set to launch Feb 2020.

**Jump Ball:** **YES Network** and **WNBA** team **New York Liberty** have partnered up. YES will televise 16 Liberty home games this season, kicking off Friday at 8pm when Liberty hosts the **Indiana Fever**. All 16 games will also be streamed on the **Fox Sports GO** app, and **CBS Sports Network** will telecast one home game on Aug 23 at 7:30pm as part of its multi-year partnership with the WNBA.

**Conventionally Bravo:** **Bravo** is launching the first ever BravoCon, an interactive experience for fans and access to Bravo's biggest shows and celebrities. The convention, taking place in NYC Nov 15-17, will feature live performances, insider panels and VIP access.

**Viacom Dividends:** **Viacom's** board declared a quarterly cash dividend of \$0.20 per share on both its Class A and Class B common stock. The dividend will be payable on July 1 to stockholders on record as of June 17.

**Stand for the Arts:** **Ovation** is expanding on its Stand for the Arts initiative, first launched in 2017. The net is recognizing 20 public schools and districts in the NYC metro area and giving each one a \$5K award to help further delivery quality arts education to their students.

**Programming:** Season 3 of **WE tv's** show "Growing Up Hip Hop: Atlanta" premieres June 13 at 9pm. This season *Bow Wow's* arrest unfolds, *Waka Flocka* and *Tammy Rivera* hit the scene and *R. Kelly's* ex-wife *Andrea "Drea" Kelly* and her three kids break their silence. -- **Science Channel** will premiere "Truth Behind the Moon Landing" on June 2 at 10pm. Timed with the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, the series dissects popular conspiracy theories around the landing featuring former NASA astronaut *Leland Melvin*, Iraq War vet and former FBI agent *Chad Jenkins* and author *Mike Bara*. -- **Showtime** announced the official name for "The L Word" sequel. The series will be called "The L Word: Generation Q" and will debut on the net this fall. Original series creator *Ilene Chaiken* and stars *Jennifer Beals*, *Katherine Moennig* and *Leisha Hailey* are all set to return. -- **Smithsonian Channel** will premiere "Smithsonian Time Capsule: Beyond Stonewall" on June 24 at 8pm. The net is also investigating what could be the largest murder case on British soil in its latest special. In "Adolf Island," premiering June 23 at 10pm, forensic archaeologist *Caroline Sturdy Colls* will go in search of a secret Nazi camp.

**People:** **Fox Entertainment** promoted two research execs in its LA office. *Gina Bahreman* was upped to vp, audience research, and *Didi Patel* was promoted to vp, affiliate research and business development. -- The **FCC** Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau named *Zac Champ* chief of staff and *Diane Burstein* as deputy bureau chief. Champ comes over from the **Wireless Infrastructure Association** where he served as vp for government affairs. Burstein joins the FCC from **NCTA**, where she served as vp and deputy general counsel. -- **Cox Communications** tapped *Louis Gump* as its new svp to lead the Cox Media division. He most recently served as CEO of **NewsON**, a digital media company founded by Cox Media Group. Prior to that role, he was pres/CEO of mobile advertising company **LSN Mobile**.

## Think about that for a minute...

### Diversion

Commentary by Steve Effros

Diversions seem to be the name of the game these days, and although we're all warned about them repeatedly, they seem to be so effective that it doesn't matter, we either use them, or fall for them regardless.

What's worse, we sometimes don't even recognize when we're doing it ourselves. Some of them have become so obvious that they've become newsworthy in and of themselves. The most obvious are many of our current president's tweets.

I need not get into the merits of what he says in those tweets to note that the tweets themselves have become the subject of news stories about diversion. The fact that whenever there is what is considered "bad news" for the administration almost automatically results in a "tweet-storm," usually on some other subject, or intended to raise some other "hot button" issue, tells you that these are intended as diversions. They are designed to draw attention away from whatever the author wants you to ignore or forget. As I wrote in a column several years ago, that's the fundamental skill of "prestidigitation." A great word that can be summarized in this context as "distraction." It's the basis of the tricks most card sharks fool us with.

But we all know that being distracted is not usually in our best interest. It's happening all around us and in many cases all we can do is shake our head in amazement. Just think of all the folks you see walking out into the street, or knocking into a street pole while being distracted by looking at their smartphone! While it almost makes me laugh at times watching these totally oblivious characters not aware of where they are going, it clearly isn't a great idea for anyone, both the distracted and those around them.



It's such a bad idea that when you're driving, you often are warned in many states that it's illegal to both text and drive. That's sort of obvious, I would think. Reading text on a small or big screen, and not keeping your eyes on the road, especially when you are travelling at 60 or 70 miles per hour, is a recipe for disaster. But, but... If that's the case, and I surely think most of us would agree with it, then why do many interstate highways now have big overhead digital signs that often flash total nonsense rather than the emergency information they were originally designed to convey? It never fails to defy my imagination why, when there is no important traffic information, the controllers of those signs, which periodically tell you it's really dangerous to text and drive, text stuff for you to read while you are driving! Who thought that was a good idea?

But apparently diversionary tactics are simply accepted today as part of the environment. We, in the "high tech" industry, are partly to blame for that since we are the ones who created, promoted, and sold the technology that is primarily responsible for creating that environment.

From electronic billboards to smartphones, Facebook and tweeting, none of it would have happened, and have the adverse effects we are now seeing, without us. So maybe it's time we also spearheaded an effort to teach folks how to use these great tools responsibly. It's certainly past time to start worrying about what our "advances" have wrought. If we were so smart we figured out how to create them, then hopefully we're also smart enough to figure out how to teach people, ourselves included, how to use them responsibly.

*Steve*

T:202-630-2099  
steve@effros.com

*(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)*

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