

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Blocked Caller: TRACED Act Passes the Senate

Legislators scored yet another victory in the war against robocalls Thursday with the Senate bipartisan 97-1 passing of the TRACED Act. The legislation, introduced by *Sen John Thune* (R-SD) and *Ed Markey* (D-MA), would allow the **FCC** to place civil penalties of up to \$10K per call for violators while extending the window the FCC has to take action from one year to up to three years after a robocall has been placed. It's now up to the House to control whether the bill stays or goes. "There are no blue robocalls or red robocallers," Markey said in a statement. "Our colleagues in the House of Representatives must heed the public's cries, pass this bill, and send it to the President's desk." The passing of the bill seems likely, as the bill had garnered more than 80 co-sponsors in the Senate before its passing. FCC chmn *Ajit Pai*, a fierce advocate for the fight against robocalls, applauded how the bill strengthens the FCC's ability to combat illegal robocalls as well as its provisions that would improve coordination between federal agencies and state attorneys general on improving deterrence and criminal prosecution of the scams. "This is a vital partnership in the fight against unwanted robocalls and one we already are working hard at," Pai said in a statement. "It's important that federal and state partners work together—and engage productively with private stakeholders—to address this important consumer protection priority." Commish *Brendan Carr* echoed Pai's sentiments, saying the FCC's new tools will allow it to "continue our crack down on these annoying calls." And it's not just government leaders that are applauding the bill's passage. **NCTA**, **ACA Connects** and **Consumer Reports** all sounded support for the legislation. "Consumers have had enough of robocalls, and this bill will help crack down on some of the worst kinds of calls," Consumer Reports policy analyst *Maureen Mahoney* said. "Consumer Reports commends the Senate for taking this bipartisan action, and we look forward to working with the House so that effective legislation to reduce the scourge of unwanted robocalls is enacted into law." For ACA Connects, the bill places an adequate burden on voice service providers to adopt call authentication technologies, but understands that not all will be able to launch them at the drop of a hat. "This bill would allow industry to continue to drive implementation of call authentication technology on a timely basis, while recognizing that smaller providers may require more time to fully implement the technology," ACA Connects pres/CEO *Matt Polka* said in a statement.

## Who Are The Most Influential Minorities and Powerful Women?



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**Below Expectations:** With rumors swirling of a possible **CBS** acquisition of **Starz**, **Lionsgate** execs remained tight-lipped, instead choosing to emphasize the rollout of Starz Play internationally during Thursday's earnings call. "Within five years we're targeted to have 15-25mln international subscribers," said Lionsgate CFO *Jimmy Barge*. "We expect Starz Play to reach profitability in fiscal '23. We plan to raise equity against Starz Play to help finance its international rollout." Starz reported 24.7mln overall domestic subs in 1Q19, up 1.2mln YOY. A large part of the jump was driven by strong OTT growth, up over 4mln subs. "We've completed a very active and productive fiscal 2019 in which we set in place all the elements for strong growth and continued value creation in the year ahead," said CEO *Jon Feltheimer*. "We've refilled our film and television content pipelines, refocused on extracting maximum value from our franchise properties and are capitalizing on an extraordinary opportunity to continue Starz's global expansion and cement its stature as one of the leading international pure play subscription video-on-demand services." Barge echoed Feltheimer's confidence, saying "Creating long-term value requires investment in short-term, and we believe we have the opportunity to create a first-class, international OTT business in a relatively short period of time." Overall, Lionsgate posted a net loss of \$24mln (11 cents a share) with adjusted operating income of \$103mln. The earnings per share of 11 cents were short consensus outlook for 19 cents. Television Production segment, and segment profits decreased by 41% to \$66mln. Shares dropped slightly at market close, down 0.19% to \$15.99.

**Not So Fast:** In response to **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai's* statement recommending approval of the **T-Mobile/Sprint** merger, 6 Dems have stepped forward calling for the Commission and the **DOJ** to reject the deal and establish a 30-day public comment period on the proposal. In a letter to Pai and DOJ antitrust division chief *Makan Delrahim*, Sens *Tom Udall* (D-NM), *Amy Klobuchar* (D-MN), *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT), *Elizabeth Warren* (D-MA), *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Cory Booker* (D-NJ) called the proposed behavioral conditions and the commitments offered up by the applicants "vague and wholly insufficient." "Among other issues, the behavioral conditions and voluntary commitments offered are filled with loopholes, lack meaningful enforcement mechanisms, and do not come close to ameliorating the negative effects that a reduction in wireless competition would cause for consumers across the country, including the wholesale and prepaid markets," the senators wrote.

**fubo Fans:** **FanDuel Group** is now the exclusive sportsbook, online casino, horse racing and DFS partner of **fuboTV**. The agreement is FanDuel's first strategic partnership with a third-party OTT internet TV service, and will expand fuboTV's sports offerings when FanDuel's betting data is integrated into the platform. The companies also signed a media buy, making FanDuel the exclusive advertiser on fubo in those categories. If that wasn't enough,

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**TVG** and **TVG2**, horse racing networks and affiliates of FanDuel, will now be available for fubo subs. TVG will be part of fubo's base package and TVG2 will be part of the Sports Plus add-on package (\$8.99 a month).

**First Responders:** **DISH** launched a new special customer offer for military members and first responders, and qualified members can receive the benefits at no additional cost. The Stars and Stripes Pack includes access to custom-curated channels including **Starz Encore Westerns**, **Smithsonian Channel**, **American Heroes Channel** and others. **DISH** is also offering a monthly family movie night, with a monthly on-demand movie rental each month, and a DVR upgrade to a compatible Hopper family set-top box. This will allow participants to stream live and recorded TV to mobile devices with **DISH Anywhere**.

**Landscape Mode:** After a year on the market, **IGTV** is taking a step back from vertical video. **Instagram** announced in a blog post Thursday it would now support landscape videos for the platform as well as its vertical staple, calling it "the right change for viewers and creators." "Vertical videos work great for creators who want to be up-close and personal with their audience; but landscape also has its strengths, especially when it comes to formats like dance and sports which are high motion and often feature a handful of people in frame," the blog post read.

**Creative Spaces:** **iONE Digital** launched a new video platform that's intended to connect audiences to young content creators telling stories from a fresh perspective. "A Space for Creators" is the ninth addition to **iONE Digital's** portfolio of national brands, and will provide an alternative space for creators to monetize their work, fund creative projects and facilitate their ability to remain independent.

**Going Next-Gen:** The **FCC Media Bureau** will begin accepting applications for ATSC 3.0 licenses through the Commission's Licensing and Management System on May 28. The news comes 18 months after the Commission adopted rules giving broadcasters the green light to use the next-gen transmission standard on a voluntary, market-driven basis. The delay came as the Bureau revised FCC Form 2100 and the LMS to allow for such filings.

**Going Bowling:** **ESPN** rolled out its bowl schedule for the 2019-2020 college football season. The net will air 35 bowl games and the College Football National Championship, as well as 14 **ESPN** owned and operated games. The schedule kicks off Dec 20 and will span 17 days.

**Supporting Art:** Just after **Ovation's** announcement that it would be expanding its Stand for the Arts initiative, the House Appropriations Committee approved legislation that would offer \$167.5m to fund the **National Endowment of the Arts**. The bill will now proceed to the full House for consideration. "Ovation TV is encouraged to see the House take another step towards preserving access to the arts for all Americans," **Ovation TV** senior director, PR **Jessica Yas Barker** said in a statement. "As a champion for the Arts, **Ovation** applauds the Appropriations Committee for recognizing that most federal funding for the Arts goes to small organizations and underserved communities."

**Charter Notes:** **Charter** has closed \$750m in aggregate principal amount of senior unsecured notes due 2029. The notes bear interest at a rate of 5.375% per annum and were issued at a price of 100% of the aggregate amount.

**Honors:** **FCC** chmn **Ajit Pai** received the Leadership in Advancing Communications Policy Award from the **Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials**. **APCO** gave the award at its 15th Annual Public Safety Communications Leadership in Policy Awards Dinner Monday night.

**Programming:** **Hulu** ordered 13 episodes of animated series "The Bravest Knight." The first five episodes of the series will premiere on **Hulu** on June 21 with additional episodes coming later in the year. -- **Disney Channel** has picked up a second season of "Sydney to the Max." Production will begin later this summer. -- **Fox Nation** will debut a new slate of programming this summer, including new shows with **FNC** contributors **Tyrus**, **Kat Timpf**, **Tammy Bruce** and **Lawrence Jones**. New programming additions roll out to subs beginning June 10. -- Docuseries "Straight Up Steve Austin" will premiere on **USA** Aug 12 at 11pm. In each episode **WWE** legend **Steve Austin** will host a celebrity guest. -- **HBO** and **BBC** picked up "Gentleman Jack" for Season 2, following the show's debut in April. -- **IFC** is airing a sing-along version of "Original Cast Album: Co-Op" on June 7 at 1am.

**People:** **FreeWheel** named **Utpal Kalita** CTO and vp, engineering for **Blockgraph**, an industry initiative designed to create a secure blockchain-based platform way to share advertising data. **Kalita** entered the role earlier this year from his role as **Eyeview Digital** CTO. -- Former **Turner** chmn/CEO **John Martin** has joined **Comscore's** board, effective Wednesday. He'll serve as chmn of the board's finance committee. **Martin** replaces **GroupM Worldwide** chief digital officer **Rob Norman**, who stepped down and is transitioning into a strategic consultant role with the company. -- **Cisco** appointed **Northrop Grumman** chmn **Wesley Bush** to its board, effective May 21. **Bush** has served as chmn since 2011, and has held senior leadership titles including CEO, COO, president, corporate vp and CFO.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Hot, Hot, Hot...

If you liked the nightmares that lasted days after watching HBO's "Chernobyl," you'll love the night terrors that plague you for weeks after watching **National Geographic's** "The Hot Zone" (premieres May 27). Like Chernobyl, this series, based on the book by Richard Preston, explores a real-life 1980s crisis that thankfully in this case didn't result in massive death but could have if a few dedicated scientists hadn't acted fast to contain the Ebola virus when it reached US soil in 1989. "You might have had to quarantine a city," *Liam Cunningham*, who plays composite Wade Carter, tells **Cablefax**. "The level of paranoia—you could have had a societal breakdown." It never came to that. But unlike the zombies his character Davos fought off in HBO's "Game of Thrones," infectious diseases like Ebola are real beasts, not fake ones. "The monster is known," he says. "There are a number of these diseases out there that live in the jungle... If the f—ker gets out, it's uncontainable." The Hot Zone's creepily paced narrative follows Dr. Nancy Jaax (*Julianna Margulies*) as she works frantically with her mentor Carter and others to contain the virus before the government is forced to take extreme measures. As actor *James D'Arcy* reminds us, his character predicts in episode three that road fatalities alone from the ensuing panic could be "anticipated in the hundreds if this gets on the news." And it was that life-or-death pressure that attracted co-creator *Kelly Souders* to the project. "As a writer, those are some exciting shoes to be put into," she tells us. Those shoes also highlight the power of science and how overachieving brainiacs can literally save us from doom. "So much of what we're going to be facing in the future is going to be in the hands of scientists as much if not more than people with guns in their hands," co-creator *Brian Peterson* tells us, noting that the series can help "see these people for what they are: heroes." — *Michael Grebb*

**Reviews:** "Fleabag," Season 2, streaming, **Amazon Prime**. One of the marks of good television is when a character in a series grows, or at least changes perspective, during the course of a season. That's the case with this excellent comedy from Britain, starring its creator (and the writer of **BBC America** hit "Killing Eve") *Phoebe Waller-Bridge*. Its excellent freshman season had Fleabag, the highly relatable main character, attacking life. This season Fleabag seems more subdued, but only slightly. Come episode 4, though, she's back on form, taking chances with her mouth and sex. This season she falls for someone who's off limits. We'll leave it there. Providing too many details will lessen viewers' enjoyment. One detail we'll divulge is Waller-Bridge's talent at breaking the fourth wall, with Fleabag talking directly to the audience. She does this exceedingly well and with great mischievousness. And as Fleabag and her beau become closer, he realizes that these fourth-wall breaks, well, you'll see. It's hilarious. -- "Biography: Chris Farley, Anything for a Laugh," 9pm, Memorial Day, **A&E**. There's plenty to learn about *Chris Farley* from this enjoyable doc. Farley came from a large Midwest family. He's almost always playing his father, or playing to him. And Farley is a college graduate. That he was extremely funny is obvious, and that he left far too soon. -- *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (05/13/19-05/19/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
ESPN	1.206	3,682
TNT	0.775	2,367
FNC	0.747	2,280
MSNBC	0.475	1,450
HBO	0.456	1,393
HGTV	0.371	1,135
USA	0.365	1,115
TBSC	0.308	941
HIST	0.298	911
HALL	0.296	903
DISC	0.281	858
A&E	0.276	842
TLC	0.273	834
ID	0.269	823
FOOD	0.238	727
CNN	0.223	683
BRAVO	0.209	638
NICK	0.205	625
ADSM	0.192	586
TVLAND	0.190	581
INSP	0.177	541
APL	0.159	486
LIFE	0.158	484
NAN	0.155	474
NBCSN	0.154	472
PARA	0.154	472
DSNY	0.150	457
DSJR	0.146	445
SYFY	0.145	444
MTV	0.142	433
FX	0.141	429
FS1	0.139	426
VH1	0.137	419
AMC	0.134	410
WETV	0.132	404
NKJR	0.129	395
TRAVEL	0.127	388
NATGEO	0.124	380
GSN	0.123	375
HMM	0.122	371
BET	0.113	345

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

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