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Volume 30 / No. 119

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Pole Position: Rural Co-Ops Don't View Attachments as Broadband Barriers

When it comes to the difficulties of deploying broadband to rural areas, don't blame pole attachment rates. That's the gist of a new paper from **The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association [NRECA]**, which represents the interests of more than 900 rural electric co-ops. The group says multiple government reports find that population density is the main barrier, and that pole attachment rates have little to no impact on rural broadband deployment. **NCTA** and **ACA Connects** have both advocated for reasonable pole attachment costs and identified it as a build-out obstacle. It sounds like **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* has been inspired by their work. "People's eyes glaze over when you describe why [pole attachments are] important, but as your testimony pointed out, this is 13% of the cost of building broadband," Pai said at ACA Summit in March. NRECA submitted the paper because it is concerned the FCC has been "advised inappropriately" to consider the pole attachments. NRECA CEO *Jim Matheson* is a member of the Commission's Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, and is unhappy the group adopted a recommendation in December that would treat co-op poles like those belonging to large invest-owned utilities. The state model code would also cap pole attachment rates in state statute. This week has been a busy one on the issue of pole attachments, with **Crown Castle Fiber** filing a pole attachment complaint at the FCC against Illinois' **ComEd**, saying the utility has denied it access to poles. At issue are "red tagged" poles that ComEd insists Crown Castle replace or reinforce. Crown argues that the conditions of the poles are unrelated to its proposed attachment. "ComEd's denial of access to the red tagged poles and demands for payment as a condition of access have impacted applications for 1,202 poles and has already cost Crown Castle over \$14mln," the company said, arguing ComEd also has failed to act in a timely manner under FCC rules for at least 10K poles. Meanwhile, a pole attachment [complaint](#) filed by **AT&T** against **Alabama Power** continues to make its way through the FCC vetting process. The telco claims it is being overcharged for attachments unless the utility can prove a higher rate is justified because a joint use agreement gives AT&T benefits over competitors. Alabama Power's rebuttal includes the argument that AT&T is regularly occupying or burdening more than its allocated space on poles. As for NRECA's white paper on pole attachments and the digital divide, it cites four instances where electric co-ops offered to provide discounted or free pole attach-

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ments to companies for expanded rural coverage, noting that all the offers were declined. In Virginia, the **Central VA Electric Coop** offered free attachments to the major telecommunications and cable service companies in exchange for providing service in the cooperative's territory. No responsive bids were submitted. It cited similar stories in Arkansas, Indiana and Tennessee.

FCC Takes Next Step on C Spire Request: The FCC Media Bureau set comment deadlines for **C Spire's** petition for a declaratory ruling that would make it so that when a market modification of a broadcast station occurs to add additional communities, the station's digital streams also would be considered to be in-DMA. Comments are due July 22, with replies due Aug 12. C-Spire made the request June 3, also filing a retrans good faith complaint against **Gray Television**, claiming the broadcaster is violating the good faith rule by declaring it will only permit the operator to carry WLOX's **CBS** multicast stream in Diamondhead, MS, if it also negotiates for and carries WWL, the New Orleans CBS affiliate owned by **Tegna**. WLOX was recently deemed local by the Media Bureau in response to a market mod request, C Spire said.

USDA Grants: Friday is the deadline for the 50% loan/50% grants in the **USDA's** Rural eConnectivity "ReConnect" Pilot Program. The 100% grant deadline in the program already passed. Applications for 100% loans through ReConnect are due July 12. The broadband loan and grant program was established by Congress last year and has a budget of \$600mIn (\$200mIn for loan/grant combos; \$200mIn for grants and \$200mIn for low-interest loans). Projects funded through this initiative must serve communities with fewer than 20K people with no broadband service or where service is slower than 10Mbps download and 1Mbps upload. Future rounds of funding for ReConnect will be announced later this year. You can view the grant applications that are currently under review via the [ReConnect map](#).

House Commerce Advances Bipartisan Robocall Bill: Everyone's working together to combat robocalls with **House Commerce** chmn *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) and ranking member *Greg Walden* (R-OR) revealing a bipartisan version of the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act in the House. The act as presented would require that phone carriers implement call authentication technology at no cost to consumers and would offer up a process for rural carriers to easily adopt the same technology. It would also allow carriers to offer call blocking at no cost on an opt-out basis. The **FCC** would be called on to issue rules protecting those consumers that continue to receive robocalls and ensuring that they can withdraw their consent for call blocking at any time. The introduction of the bipartisan bill comes two weeks after the FCC approved a declaratory ruling affirming that service providers are allowed to block

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unwanted calls on an opt-out basis. It also adopted a NPRM that proposed requiring service providers to implement the SHAKEN/STIR caller ID authentication framework if they don't already have it by the end of this year. "Robocalls have become a scourge on our daily lives causing many Americans to simply stop answering their phones," **NCTA** said in a statement. "This legislation along with the efforts by the FCC to combat robocalls are critical to protecting consumers from this nuisance."

Amazon Music Arrives on Xfinity: **Comcast** announced that **Amazon Music** is coming to its **X1** and **Xfinity Flex** platforms in the coming weeks. The MSO claims this marks the first time an ad-free and on demand streaming service will be available directly on the TV through a pay-TV provider. X1 and Flex consumers will be able to access the app by saying "Amazon Music" into their voice remote. It's an expansion of Comcast's partnership with Amazon, which started last year when the two launched Prime Video on X1.

Netflix Initiated: **Wolfe Research** initiated **Netflix** with an "outperform" and a \$442 price target. The firm believes the **Disney+** rollout will hit other OTT players harder than Netflix, and highlights that the streamer has a ton of new content coming in the second half of the year.

HBO Leads TCA Awards: With 15 nominations, **HBO** edged out **Netflix** to lead in the 35th Annual **Television Critics Assn** (TCA) Awards. Netflix scored 14 nods, followed by **FX** (8), **Amazon** (5), **CBS** (4) and **PBS** (4). In contention for Program of the Year are HBO's "Chernobyl" and "Game of Thrones," Netflix's "Russian Doll" and "When They See Us," FX's "Pose" and Amazon's "Fleabag." Winners will be announced Aug 3 at the Beverly Hilton.

Gracenote Introduces Video Popularity Score: **Gracenote** revealed a new data offering designed to give providers a better understanding of what shows and movies are the most popular with viewers. The Gracenote Video Popularity Score will bring together the recency of TV show airings and theatrical film releases, viewership and awareness signals from Gracenote, **Nielsen** and external sources to create a numerical score representing that entertainment's place in the current content landscape. The solution will be offered as part of Gracenote's Advanced Discovery suite of metadata products designed for digital video opportunities.

Ratings: Season Two of **Paramount Network's** "Yellowstone" drew 3.9mln total viewers in L+SD. It was also the #1 most social cable drama for June 19, earning 45K interactions and 20K mentions on Twitter alone.

Programming: **Paramount Network** has greenlit unscripted series "The Last Cowboy." The show will highlight the horsemen and trainers competing in the world of professional reining. -- **Smithsonian Channel** is celebrating the 400th anniversary of the first American democratic assembly by trying to discover more about founding father *Sir George Yeardley* in "America's Hidden Stories: Mystery at Jamestown." The series will premiere on July 29 at 8pm. -- **MTV's** "Wild 'N Out" franchise is expanding with a summer series airing on sister net **VH1**. Starting July 7 at 7pm, the episodes will feature VH1 stars. Later in August, the franchise will also get its own **Pluto** channel. -- It's time to get back on the ice, and **NHL Network** is kicking off the NHL Draft with six live hours of coverage, including Round 1 preview and recap shows. The coverage will also include the exclusive US telecast of Rounds 2-7. Starting Friday at 6pm, "NHL Tonight: 2019 NHL Draft Preview" will include interviews, analysis and segments on the top prospects. -- The NY Lizards of Major League Lacrosse are coming to **MSG Networks**, with the first telecast June 29 at 7:30pm ET.

SCTE Celebrates Golden Anniversary: **SCTE** celebrated its 50th anniversary at its Exton, Pennsylvania headquarters Thursday. The event included remarks from pres/CEO *Mark Dzuban* and a proclamation by the office of *Rep Danielle Friel-Otten* (D-PA).

People: **OWN** has named *Karen Grant-Selma* svp, business & legal affairs for the network effective June 17. She'll report to **OWN** president *Tina Perry*. Before coming to **OWN**, Grant-Selma handled business and legal affairs for **Dreamworks Animation**. -- *Paul Medford* has joined **Nickelodeon** as vp, unscripted, current series. Medford comes to Nickelodeon with a TV production background with credits including "America's Next Top Model," "Project Runway" and "Skin Wars." -- **Liberty Latin America** appointed chief people officer and svp *Kerry Scott* to lead its operations center in Panama City, Panama. She'll relocate with the expanded role and maintain her current responsibilities.

Obituary: *Jim Ball*, owner of cable contracting company **Ball Cable** in NC, passed away Monday following an unexpected illness. Ball was a founder and first president of the Crystal Coast Chapter of **SCTE-ISBE** and was honored in 2015 as Chapter Member of the Year. He served as chapter president from 2010-2016 and then again from 2018 until April of this year.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

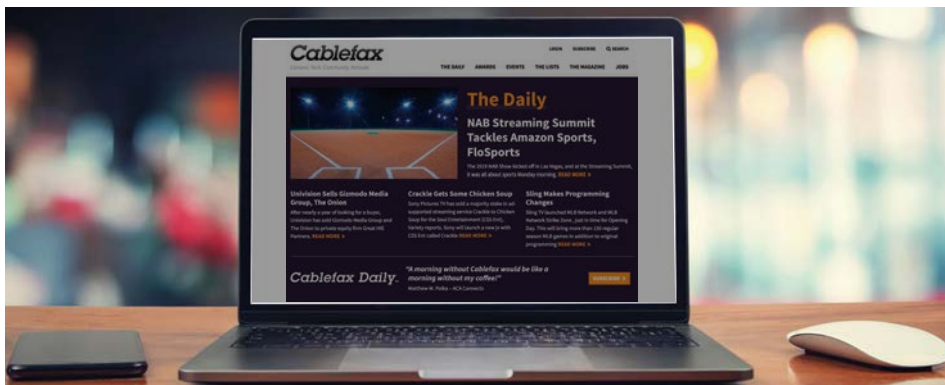
Breaking Pure...

When people talk about crime, the term “Mennonite mob” doesn’t usually enter the conversation. But make no mistake: it’s very real, and it fuels plenty of scripted drama and mayhem in **WGN America’s** “Pure,” now in its second season and feeling very much like the lovechild of the 1985 movie “Witness” and the TV series “Breaking Bad” (Yes, Witness was about the Amish, not Mennonites, but a similar world). Unlike those previous examples, however, Pure delves even more deeply into female characters who can be just as conflicted as male anti-heroes struggling between doing the right thing and doing what’s necessary to protect their families or communities. Like Walter White, S2’s central figure Anna Funk (*Alex Paxton-Beesley*) finds herself running a drug empire from within an insulated Mennonite community under the thumb of Mexican gangsters (the Mennonite mob has its roots in the Cuauhtémoc area of Mexico). Her efforts to keep it a secret from certain family members, while seducing others into her criminal web, creates a darkly intriguing juxtaposition between the innocence of a community that has rejected modernity and the very modern vices fed by the drug trade. Creator *Michael Amo* worked for years to realize Pure’s vision and told *CFX* that he’s excited to eject his characters from their protected cocoons this season. “Season 2 is about them being cast out of Eden and into outlander hell,” he said, noting that Anna’s husband Noah (*Ryan Robbins*) goes on a separate journey of self-discovery, both “under the worst of circumstances.” The truth is that if you like shows like “Ozark,” “Breaking Bad” or “Narcos,” you’ll probably find yourself getting sucked into this rather unique and slow-boiling dissection of how crime can corrupt even the most good-natured among us. In that way, it’s the same kind of cautionary tale—told from the rare perspective of a seldom explored subculture. — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: “The Loudest Voice,” series premiere, 10pm, Sunday, June 30, **Showtime**. Viewers can have fun with this series, at least at the outset. Watch it with someone who doesn’t know that *Russell Crowe* is hiding under what looks to be several layers of latex as the late *Roger Ailes*. Have them try to guess who’s portraying the **Fox News Channel** kingpin. Once the novelty wears off, viewers likely will find Crowe’s performance impressive and the series compelling, at times. Crowe brings a mix of earthiness and intellect to the multilayered Ailes. In the early eps (we’ve seen just three), there’s really nobody else to challenge the dominance of Crowe’s character. Crowe’s Ailes even makes *Rupert Murdoch* (*Simon McBurney*) seem timid. Where these early eps succeed is when they offer insight into how Ailes’ mind worked to create FNC. — “Yellowstone Live,” Season 2 premiere, 10pm ET, Sunday, **Nat Geo**. It was a novel idea last summer. Nat Geo covered Yellowstone Live, as a news event, for four nights. This is take two. Spread out over 3,500 miles and three states, the park is replete with action: bison mating, beavers and cubs playing, natural wonders like Old Faithful being naturally wonderful. Ironically, some of 2018’s best moments were taped segments that offered interesting depth. We’re anxious to see this year’s version. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings*		
(6/10/19-6/16/19)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.717	2191
MSNBC	0.482	1,471
HGTV	0.424	1,296
A&E	0.397	1,212
USA	0.349	1,066
HISTORY	0.319	973
HALL	0.307	937
ID	0.299	914
TLC	0.295	903
TBSC	0.289	882
FOOD	0.267	817
DISC	0.262	799
TNT	0.241	736
CNN	0.238	728
ESPN	0.226	690
ADSM	0.226	690
NICK	0.219	668
BRAVO	0.206	630
TVLAND	0.197	602
FX	0.187	572
AMC	0.185	566
FRFM	0.180	550
LIFE	0.176	536
NAN	0.173	529
SYFY	0.172	526
INSP	0.172	526
TRAVEL	0.160	489
DSNY	0.159	485
WETV	0.156	476
GSN	0.155	475
MTV	0.144	441
OWN	0.143	437
APL	0.141	431
HBO	0.140	427
VH1	0.139	425
HMM	0.136	415
NATGEO	0.132	404
DSJR	0.131	399
NKJR	0.128	390
PARA	0.128	390
CRN	0.120	365

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



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