

# Cablefax Daily™

Wednesday — February 19, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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## Election Year: WEC Lays Out Cable's 2020 Legislative Opportunity

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle will be distracted from now until the November election with primaries and national conventions, but some think that presents an opportunity for cable to have its voice heard loud and clear in Washington. During an **ACA Connects** panel Tuesday at **NCTC's Winter Educational Conference**, *Rhod Shaw*, principal & president of the **Alpine Group**, said many lawmakers are feeling unsure about what will occur in their own primary or what voters are interested in. With that, they're tuning in more with what's happening on the ground and who their friends are within their districts. That includes ISPs and MVPDs located in the heart of rural America. "You have more influence or more power than you might actually expect or think in this political ecosystem," Shaw said. He's still riding high on the passage late last year of the Television Viewer Protection Act, which includes a provision to ensure MVPD buying groups and large broadcast station groups are covered under rules requiring good faith negotiations for retransmission consent. "We overcame both inertia and outright opposition to move any bill... and there was only one entity in Washington, DC, that got something successfully into that..." Shaw said, crediting much of that to efforts by ACA Connects members. "It's really fun to walk down the hallway and have the broadcasters come up and hate you." ACA Connects vp, government affairs *Ross Lieberman* encouraged NCTC members to keep an eye on the upcoming C-band auction if they are currently using that spectrum to deliver video to their customers. Lieberman said ACA Connects submitted an extensive filing to the **FCC** Tuesday with suggestions on how to transition the band's incumbent users so that it is done not just quickly, but well. "This could be a mess... it has to be well-coordinated because it all has to be completed in about two-and-a-half years," he said. While the FCC is promising to cover satellite transition costs for incumbent users, ACA Connects has argued that the Commission should give operators the option to put that money towards delivering video over fiber. The current C-band proposal does allow incumbents to receive an unspecified lump sum to use however they please, and that is currently the best option for those that want to make the investment in fiber. As for wildcard events that could drastically affect the cable community over the next year, Shaw pointed to a change in power in the White House. "If there is a change in administration and it was to go from what you see in a Trump world to what you would see in a *Bernie Sanders* world, what does that do to the government's posture towards any business, let alone this particular business?" Shaw said. "It could affect

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This year's Program Committee, co-chaired by Ed Marchetti of Comcast and Tom Monaghan of Charter, is searching for subject matter expertise in categories related to the industry's 10G initiative, as well as breakthrough service opportunities that will shape the future of connectivity.

**Key Dates & Action Items**

- Abstract submission deadline April 10, 2020
- Program Committee selections will be announced by May 12, 2020
- Selected participants are required to complete and submit an electronic version of their white paper and an associated PowerPoint presentation by August 7, 2020, for inclusion in Cable-Tec Expo<sup>®</sup> 2020



For general questions regarding the Expo technical workshops or the abstract submission process, e-mail us at [EXPO\\_info@scte.org](mailto:EXPO_info@scte.org)

## The Cable-Tec Expo<sup>®</sup> 2020 Fall Technical Forum Workshop Tracks

Wireline Access Network	Wireless Access Network	Converging Access Network	Powering 10G	Internet of Things	Operational Transformation	Network Operations 2.0	Workplace of the Future	Business Services	Video Services	Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Data Analytics	Security & Privacy	Cloud & Virtualization

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the courts, how the agencies operate and, obviously, what kind of laws we could be looking at come January of next year.” **Cinnamon Mueller** partner *Bruce Beard* pointed to 2020 being a year where cable operators will need to renegotiate their retransmission consent deals. While he’s hopeful that the buying group provisions will help the process, he encouraged operators to get in front of it early and begin informing consumers on the rate increases that will be coming. “Every three years, we think it can’t get any worse and it’s going to get worse,” Beard said.

**WEC Notebook:** In a fireside chat with **NCTC CFO Lisa Hood**, **Raymond James** telecom managing director *Frank Louthan* said he believes some form of pay TV will always exist. But he’s betting on services like **YouTube TV** that offer smaller packages at a lower price point that are delivered via broadband. “If you’re losing money on video, you should probably consider getting out of that business, and I don’t think that’s bad,” Louthan said. “Help the customers find the right streaming service or over-the-top service and get out of that business.” Louthan said one of the biggest mistakes he’s seen by one of the big players recently is **AT&T** shutting down its **U-verse** service and instead directing customers to DirecTV. “They’ve got a strategic reason for wanting to shut down the U-verse platform, but they’re chasing off broadband customers,” Louthan said. “To the extent that you can make that transition to keep broadband customers and let them take an OTT video [service] of their choice... that’s a great thing.” -- NCTC revealed new partnerships with **Amazon**, infrastructure product manufacturer **PerfectVision**, marketing firm **Techint Labs** and **Cisco** Gold partner **CCI Systems**. The deals will give NCTC members price discounts on PerfectVision grounding supplies and tools, Techint’s digital lead generation programs and Cisco products. The Amazon initiative will allow member companies to purchase Fire TV streaming devices at a discounted rate and supply them to consumers. Operators may offer the Fire TV devices bundled with their pay TV service or in conjunction with any broadband offerings. -- For small cable operators, being involved in the communities they serve isn’t just a marketing play. It’s just another way to support the customer. When asked about **ImOn Communication’s** decision to secure the naming rights to the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena through 2024 during a panel Monday, pres/CEO *Patrice Carroll* said the buy was an important move to invest in the community. “The ice arena is an important element in Cedar Rapids that was in need of some funds to ensure upkeep. It turned out to be a very good way that we could demonstrate our support for the community,” she said. ImOn also offers free WiFi in the public spaces of all the communities it serves. There’s no limit on use for subscribers and non-subscribers receive two hours of access. Others spoke about the importance of community connection. When it acquires a regional cable system, **Vast Broadband** evp/COO *Larry Eby* focuses on supporting new employees to show them that the company is invested in the individuals that live and work in its communities. “We have town hall meetings where we travel to the

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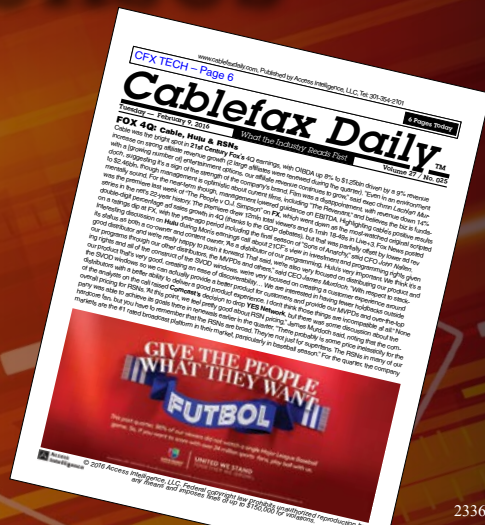
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regions and meet with every employee... because we want constant feedback, but that interaction is a great time for us to continually talk about what we want this company to be,” Eby said.

**ISP Groups Challenge Maine Privacy Law:** NCTA, ACA Connects, USTelecom and CTIA filed a joint legal challenge to Maine’s new privacy law. “The statute imposes unprecedented and unduly burdensome restrictions on ISPs; and only ISPs; protected speech,” the associations said in their complaint, filed Friday. They claim the law violates the First Amendment by requiring ISPs to secure opt-in consent from customers before using non-identifying information and imposes an opt-out consent obligation on using data that by definition is not customer personal information. They also say it limits ISPs from advertising and marketing non-communications related services to customers and prohibits them from offering discounts, loyalty rewards or other cost-saving benefits in exchange for a customer’s consent to use their personal info. At the same time, they argue the statute offers no restrictions to other entities in the internet ecosystem or brick-and-mortar space. The law is slated to take effect July 1. This isn’t the only lawsuit Maine is entertaining from the industry. **C-SPAN, Comcast, A+E Networks** and others have sued over the state’s law requiring cable operators to allow subs to purchase programming on an a la carte basis. The court issued a preliminary injunction, temporarily halting the law, on Dec 20.

**Marquee Sports Network Strikes Streaming Deal:** Hulu is adding the upcoming **Marquee Sports Network** to its live TV service. Through the offering, Chicago Cubs fans will have access to Marquee, which will air nearly every Cubs Spring Training game and at least 145 regular season games. Hulu and **AT&T TV Now** are currently the only streaming option for customers to watch the RSN, which still lacks a deal with **Comcast**. Marquee also has deals with **Charter, Mediacom** and **RCN**. The net debuts Feb 22 when the Cubs take on the Oakland Athletics in its first Spring Training game.

**TiVo 4Q Earnings:** TiVo, which is in the process of combining with **Xperi Corp**, reported 2019 revenue of \$668.1mln—in the top range of its previous guidance. For 2020, it anticipates revenue of \$650-690mln, not including the impact of the Xperi transaction. For 4Q, TiVo recorded a net loss of \$222.5mln, up from \$288.2mln a year ago. Total revenue for 4Q ticked up 4% to \$175.2mln, while licensing rev for US pay TV providers grew by 11% over 4Q18 to \$47.2mln. New media, international pay TV providers and others rose 24% to \$25.7mln. The quarter included a long-term extension with **Roku** for its streaming platform. TiVo also said it entered into a long-term license with a “major US-based OTT service” this quarter.

**Etkind Out at Science Channel:** Marc Etkind has stepped down as **Science Channel’s** gm, **Discovery** confirmed. He joined the network more than four years ago, after coming over from **Destination America**. In all, he spent 12 years at Discovery, including a stint at **Animal Planet**. *Deadline* first reported the news. Etkind’s exit comes six months after **Animal Planet** pres *Susanna Dinnage* exited the company.

**Canoe Sees YOY Growth:** **Canoe Ventures** saw another year of rapid growth, increasing its impressions on national TV network programming available on cable operators’ VOD services from 26bln in 2018 to 27.3bln in 2019. That’s a long way from the 6.3bln it saw just five years ago in 2014. Saturdays had the highest impressions by day of week, averaging 4.5bln. The company also found that the vast majority of its campaigns have an ad frequency cap of two per episode, limiting over-exposure. By episode, 56% of campaigns in an episode or movie had one ad impression, and 29% had two. Just 5% had four or more ad impressions. Canoe covers 38mln households through **Comcast, Cox, Charter/Spectrum** and **Frontier** footprints.

**Distribution:** **beIN Sports Xtra, beIN Sports’** free 24/7 streaming service, was added to **Pluto TV**. The news comes after the streamer joined **Xumo TV** last week, and **Samsung TV Plus** earlier this month. -- **Insight TV** signed a new deal for its HD channel with **fuboTV**, with it now available in fuboTV’s Adventure Plus package. The company also struck a deal with **Service Electric Cable**, which will deploy Insight TV to Service Electric 4K customers on March 1. The launch comes just in time for the its first-ever live stream of EDM music festival Tomorrowland in the French Alps beginning March 18.

**On the Circuit:** **SCTE-ISBE** is gearing up for **Cable-Tec Expo** in Denver, calling for papers for Expo’s Fall Technical Forum workshops. SCTE-ISBE, **CableLabs** and **NCTA** jointly opened a search for subject matter expertise in 13 categories, including IoT; artificial intelligence, machine learning and data analytics; operational transformation; powering 10G; and the workplace of the future. Expo takes place Oct 13-16.

**Ratings:** **Turner Sports’** coverage of the 2020 NBA All-Star Game averaged 7.3mln viewers, up 8% YOY. Viewership peaked at an average of 8mln from 11:15-11:30pm, as the teams played a commercial-free fourth quarter. Pre-game coverage on **TNT**, with tributes to *Kobe Bryant*, averaged 6.3mln viewers for a 19% increase YOY. All-Star Sunday Night is now TNT’s most-watched coverage of the event since 2017. -- **History’s** three-night miniseries “Washington” premiered Sunday with 2.6mln L+SD viewers. Night 1 became cable’s No 1 nonfiction miniseries premiere in nearly three years.