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What the Industry Reads First

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Election 2020: Super Tuesday Brings Super Bucks to Cable Ad Spending

Super Tuesday doesn't just help shake out the Democratic presidential race, it's also a springboard for political ad spending. TV continues to draw big bucks, with Viamedia reporting Tuesday that spending in cable political advertising from presidential candidates has jumped as much as 146% vs. year-to-date 2016. The big story early on, of course, has been Michael Bloomberg's prolific spending, with Viamedia estimating that the Bloomberg campaign accounts for 64% of the year-to-date 2020 spending by presidential candidates, and 31% of all year-to-date cable political ad spending. It's fortunate for the industry because without it, presidential spending at this point would be pacing behind. "You don't have **Right to Rise** and the other Republican PACs that spent an awful lot of money, which we didn't see this go-round because the Dems have opted not to take Super PACs in a large part," Dan Sinagoga, vp, political advertising for **Effectv**—a **Comcast** company, told **CFX**. "From cycle to cycle, we were down 16-20 in like presidential years, and now have got back to where we need to be and some because of Bloomberg getting into the mix. And we are ahead of '18 midterms, so the year is off to a very good start for the industry in general." There's a possible negative side to Bloomberg making buys in more than 100 DMAs, instead of the standard purchases in key battleground states. It ratchets up pressure on broadcast stations to get a piece of that Bloomberg pie and Effectv is seeing market cost per point actually going backwards from historical levels in some instances. That could open the door for nonpolitical advertisers to lower their spend. "It's something we're keeping an eye on because the core side of the field could be asking for more for less," Sinagoga said. "Given that the market efficiencies are better than in the past, that could be a revenue challenge for not only the cable companies, but the broadcast stations." As is the case in advertising overall, programmatic and addressable are big buzz words in political right now. With more addressable options in the marketplace, addressable is costing "quite a bit lower" than in 2018, Sinagoga said. **Ampersand**, formerly NCC, is putting its new AND Platform to work for political. All that set-top data from its owners—**Cox**, **Charter** and **Comcast**—helps to give campaigns intelligence on where an actual voter lives, what media covers them and what they're consuming. "We're really trying to offer that across the board solution to answer those questions and help campaigns reach those voters they've taken a lot of time and organically identified how they're going to vote," said **Tim Kay**, vp, political strategy for Ampersand. Presidential is certainly taking up most of the air in the room

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these days, but Kay said a number of congressional and senate races are starting to heat up—a function of the political calendar starting to open up. Spot cable firm Viamedia predicts the election excitement will continue on the down ballot. “We’ve prepared ourselves in what we call local-local political, the local state, the local county races. Whether that’s the sheriff race, the schoolboard, those candidates want to make sure they can get airtime, so you’re going to see a huge amount of not just state-wide and nationwide advertising on television, but you’re going to see a huge amount of local-local,” Viamedia pres/CEO *Mark Lieberman* said. Another important area to watch this election year is with Latino voters. “We’re being told that it’s going to be the largest turnout ever in the Hispanic community to vote,” Sinagoga said, adding that Effectv is hoping that instead of relying just on **Univision** and **Telemundo** to reach that audience, smart campaigns will take into consideration the large bilingual population and target other key networks, like **HGTV**, **TNT** and **TBS**. Univision and Telemundo are both very active, with Univision releasing a poll Monday that found more than 75% of California Latino registered voters plan to vote Super Tuesday. Telemundo has launched “Decision 2020,” a year-long news and civic engagement initiative focused on the Latino electorate. Both are doing their part to make sure campaigns utilize their media portfolios—that includes offering creative consultation services and lots of data. “Campaigns are finally realizing they cannot miss the opportunity to win over this audience and they’re actually listening to us. We’re in robust conversations with practically all presidential candidates,” said *Michele Day*, Univision’s svp, political, advocacy and government group. “Our billing is outpacing our expectations exponentially.”

YouTube TV Keeps Fox RSNs (For Now): YouTube TV and Sinclair have reached a temporary contract extension for the carriage of the **Fox RSNs** and **YES Network** that will keep the networks on YouTube TV’s lineup while negotiations continue on a new distribution deal. The TeamYouTube Twitter account said Monday that it would be “sure to share more info on a potential resolution/timeline soon.” YouTube TV’s carriage deal for the RSNs and YES was set to expire Friday at midnight ET, and YouTube previously announced that it would drop the channels on Saturday if it could not agree to a renewal with Sinclair.

Pluto TV Launches New Campaign: ViacomCBS has launched a major branding campaign for its AVOD service **Pluto TV**, debuting a new tagline “Drop In. It’s Free.” As part of what Pluto says is its largest ever consuming marketing campaign, ViacomCBS is highlighting the service’s ease of use and unrestricted access. The campaign includes a 30-second commercial, digital and social activations, in-theater advertising and connected TV and streaming audio takeovers. Pluto is also launching a new logo, and its new identity is rolling out across platform, on-air and marketing touchpoints in the coming weeks. Paired with the campaign is the release of Project Venetia, Pluto TV’s

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“most significant product update in years.” Project Venetia includes a new linear UX, improved on-demand UX and a channel favoriting option. It also includes a “Watch List,” where viewers can save top picks and come back to watch, and a “Watch Now” button where viewers can save select titles for on-demand to view at a later time, even when watching a program live. Project Venetia is live across **Apple**, **Vizio** and **Roku** devices with staged releases, including **Android** and **Amazon Fire TV**, coming in the next few months.

PTC Calls for Disbandment of TV Monitoring Board: The **Parents Television Council** has again called for the **TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board** to be disbanded following the release of its first-ever annual report. “While I appreciate whatever volume of effort that went into the Report’s production, I am profoundly disappointed by the woefully inadequate output,” PTC pres *Tim Winter* said in a letter to **NCTA** pres/CEO *Michael Powell*, who also chairs the TVOMB. “If the objective was to produce a report, then you succeeded; but if the objective was to help parents to be better parents, then sadly you’ve failed.” Since November, PTC has called for the TVOMB to be broken up and reconstituted to better represent the interests of children and families. It has also asked Congress to conduct a bipartisan, bicameral fact-finding hearing or symposium to review the definitions of each age-based content rating.

AT&T TV Launches Nationwide: **AT&T TV** launched Monday nationwide following its 13-market pilot. **AT&T** is advertising **AT&T TV**, which is powered by an Android TV set-top box, as an all-in-one entertainment service with live TV packages and access to apps through the Google Play Store. Other features include a voice remote with Google Assistant pre-installed and a cloud DVR with 500 hours of storage. **AT&T** is heavily discounting the service to entice consumers with packages starting at \$49.99/month for 12 months with a two-year agreement. After the first 12 months, prices rise to \$93/month for the base entertainment package. **AT&T** is also offering bundles with **AT&T TV** and its 1Gbps internet within its fiber footprint where each service costs \$39.99/month for the first 12 months of a two-year contract.

Distribution: **FX** officially launched on **Hulu**, with more than 40 of **FX Networks’** current and legacy series are now exclusively streaming on the service. On Thursday, “Devs” will premiere, marking the first original series to make its debut exclusively on **FX** on **Hulu**. -- **SVOD True Royalty TV** is now available on **Cox’s** Contour TV. Contour customers can add the service to their lineup for \$5.99/month. **True Royalty TV** is also available on **X1**, **Sling TV**, **Apple TV**, **Amazon Fire TV**, **Roku**, online and on **iOS** and **Android**.

Nexstar Completes Fox Transaction: **Nexstar** completed the previously announced agreements with **Fox** to purchase the Charlotte **Fox** affiliate **WJZY** and the **MyNetworkTV** affiliate **WMYT** for approx. \$45m in cash. **Nexstar** divested Seattle **Fox** affiliate **KCPQ**, **MyNetworkTV** affiliate **KZJO** and Milwaukee **Fox** affiliate **WITI** for approx. \$350m in cash.

TiVo Scores Latest Win in Comcast Patent Battle: The US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled in favor of **TiVo/Rovi** in the company’s ongoing patent dispute with **Comcast**. The decision affirmed the **International Trade Commission’s** jurisdiction and its decision to ban the importation of **Comcast** set-top boxes that infringe **Rovi** patents. The ITC previously found that **Comcast’s** customers directly infringe **Rovi’s** ‘263 and ‘413 patents by using **Comcast’s** **X1** system, and that **Comcast** is in violation of the **Tariff Act of 1930** by importing **X1** set-top boxes using the infringing system. The ‘263 and ‘413 patents describe an **IPG** for remote access to programming. **Comcast** fought back against the ruling by arguing that it is not the official importer, as **Arris** and **Technicolor** import the boxes before distributing them to **Comcast**. It also asserted that the ITC no longer had authority in the matter as the ‘263 and ‘413 patents expired in September and July, respectively. “The Federal Circuit affirmed the ITC’s Final Determination and what we at **TiVo** have known for years—**Comcast** infringed **Rovi’s** patents and its business is subject to the ITC’s jurisdiction,” *Arvin Patel*, **Rovi** evp/chief IP officer, said in a statement. “We understand the value of our patented technology and why **Comcast** has relied on it heavily since launching its **X1** platform. But **Comcast** cannot continue to use **Rovi’s** patented technology without paying for a license.” **Comcast** sees it differently. “The Federal Circuit Court’s ruling applies to expired patents that have already been invalidated by the patent office and therefore are irrelevant to what **Comcast** offers customers today. **Rovi** is misleading the public by suggesting that there is an import ban on any **Comcast X1** set-top boxes—that’s just not true,” a spokesperson said.

People: **CBS** communications chief *Dana McClintock* is leaving **ViacomCBS** this summer, after 27 years in **CBS** communications. The news comes as former **NBC** exec *George Cheeks* gears up to take over the role of pres/CEO, **CBS** Entertainment from former **CBS** chmn/CEO *Joe Ianniello*. Last week, *Justin Dini* was bumped up to head of communications, and *Josh Line* was brought onboard as evp, chief brand officer. -- **Locast** added communications policy advocate *Gigi Sohn* to its board. She is a distinguished fellow at the Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy and was counselor to former **FCC** chmn *Tom Wheeler*. -- After six years as a consultant for **Philo**, the vMVPD put a ring on it and made *Robert Roper* its chief legal officer. **Roper** is well known in cable circles, having had legal counsel stints at **NCTA** and **Discovery** before returning to private practice and representing primarily cable networks and production companies.