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Cablefax Daily™

Friday — May 29, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 104

Internet Now: Bipartisan Bill Tries to Fast-Track RDOF Deployment

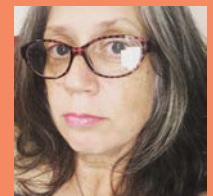
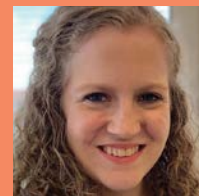
House Majority Whip *James Clyburn* (D-SC) and Rep *Fred Upton* (R-MI) introduced the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act Thursday in an attempt to fast-track the deployment of government funding to shovel-ready high-speed internet projects. At its heart, the bill is an attempt to quickly get fiber deployed to those that still lack connectivity, particularly at a time when remote learning and teleworking has become the norm for many Americans. "I always like to say that this is a great country. Our challenge is making that greatness accessible and affordable for all Americans," Clyburn said on a press call. "There is one area where there is an accessibility and affordability need, and that is in the area of broadband deployment." The bill would direct the **FCC** to accelerate the deployment of funds to bidders in the upcoming Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction that commit to building a gigabit tier broadband network, begin construction within 6 months of receiving funding and providing internet service within a year. The FCC would use the preliminary list of areas eligible for funding it published on March 17 to identify areas eligible for buildouts under the Clyburn-Upton legislation. Clyburn acknowledged that there are flaws with the FCC's current broadband maps, and that many of his colleagues have asked that there be better data gathered before funding is distributed to bidders. "That would be fine if we did not have this pandemic," Clyburn said. "The Commission would also maintain the short-form application process for those looking to bid in the auction and add an accelerated option for those looking to begin fiber construction this year and meet the gigabit tier requirements. Those applicants would be separately evaluated and be awarded geographic areas by September at the reserve price. All areas not awarded during the accelerated process would remain in the October RDOF Auction. The FCC's current plan for the RDOF auction would see funding distributed over the next 10 years, but most winning bidders would be required to serve locations within the first five years. According to a memo from the **Congressional Research Service**, the FCC likely would not have to undertake a notice-and-comment rulemaking in order to implement the bill's provision and the RDOF auction would still be able to proceed on its current schedule. The Clyburn-Upton RDOF language is also included in the Heroes Act, the coronavirus relief package that passed the House earlier this month. Due to the bill's bipartisan nature and the focus from both parties on making broadband available for all, Clyburn believes this language will make it through the Senate—either on its own or as part of the Heroes Act. He has also already received support from the CEOs

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of more than 70 rural electric co-ops, all of whom have committed to FTTP construction projects if the language is approved. "I don't think there's any real source of opposition," Clyburn said.

Trump Signs Social Media Order: Many didn't bother to wait for President *Trump* to actually release his social media executive order before criticizing it. The highly publicized [order](#), which he signed late Thursday, was slammed by Dems as legal experts cast doubts on its ability to survive a court challenge. The order, dubbed the "Executive Order on Preventing Online Censorship," calls for federal agencies to develop rules detailing how and when the law shields social media companies when they remove or moderate content on their platforms. Moments after the order was signed, **FCC** commish *Brendan Carr* appeared on **Fox Business**' "Lou Dobbs," calling it "welcomed news." "These are the largest, most powerful organizations when it comes to speech, so I think it's entirely appropriate for the president to say 'isn't it time to take another look at Section 230 and whether that makes sense given where we are today,'" said Carr, who complained the "far left" has put pressure on social media platforms for the "crime, in their view, of staying neutral" in the 2016 election and are "committed to not let these platforms stay neutral in the run up to 2020." The order was introduced after **Twitter** fact-checked a tweet by the president. "This does not work. Social media can be frustrating. But an Executive Order that would turn the Federal Communications Commission into the President's speech police is not the answer," FCC Democratic commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* said in a statement. "It's time for those in Washington to speak up for the First Amendment. History won't be kind to silence." Rep *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) piled on: "The President is trying to undercut the ability of online platforms to police harmful content." The order calls on **NTIA** to petition the **FCC** to open a proceeding on Section 230, which gives online companies broad protection from content posted by users. "The FCC should reject this attempt to require it to regulate online platforms. If the FCC were to respond to the President's request, not only would it be acting without any statutory authority and contradicting its own recent holdings, it would be acting unconstitutionally and abandoning any pretense that it is an 'independent' agency," **Public Knowledge** said. Before the order was released, Republican commish *Mike O'Rielly* took to Twitter and told folks to take a deep breath on the order, which he said he hadn't seen. "@realDonaldTrump has right to seek review of statute's application. As a conservative, I'm troubled voices are stifled by liberal tech leaders. At same time, I'm extremely dedicated to First Amendment which governs much here," he wrote. **Facebook** CEO *Mark Zuckerberg* appeared on **Fox News**' "The Daily Briefing" Thursday afternoon. "I have to understand what they actually would intend to do. But in general, I think a government choosing to censor a platform because they're worried about censorship doesn't exactly strike me as the right reflex there," Zuckerberg said.

Satellite Operators Agree to Clear C-band Fast: **Intelsat**, **SES** and **Eutelsat** have told the **FCC** they will acceler-

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RESUMES

ate the clearing of the C-band. Under that accelerated plan, satellite operators holding C-band spectrum licenses would be required to fully vacate the spectrum by 2023 instead of 2025. In return, those operators would be given compensation for their transition costs as well as incentive payments. **Telesat** and **Star One** are also eligible for the accelerated clearing payments, but they must indicate to the Commission that they intend to move forward with faster clearing by Friday. The C-band auction is scheduled to kick off on Dec 8.

First HBO Max Numbers: **HBO Max** was downloaded on mobile devices 87K times on its first day, according to data firm **Sensor Tower**. That number is far lower than short-form streamer **Quibi**'s 300K day one downloads and, of course, **Disney+**'s 4mln users, but there's a catch. The firm's data does not account for app downloads on TV streaming devices or active **HBO Now** subscribers that automatically received an upgrade to HBO Max. For those customers, the HBO Now app should have automatically updated to the HBO Max app on May 27.

Business Internet at Home: **AT&T** is bringing enterprise broadband to residences as work-from-home orders shift from temporary to permanent. Dubbed "Home Office Connectivity" from AT&T Business, it brings business-paid internet access to employees' homes.

Vexus Moving Forward: **Vexus Fiber**, formerly **NTS**, has unveiled its new brand to the communities it serves in West TX and Southeastern LA. New owner **Vast Broadband** rebranded the systems as Vexus in mid-March, just as the COVID-19 crisis was beginning. It also hit at the same time Vexus was beginning massive construction projects in Amarillo and Abilene to expand the network. "We knew that Internet connectivity was of the utmost importance during this time, so we made sure we were able to continue the construction projects while keeping the safety of both customers and employees a top priority," CEO *Jim Gleason* said in a statement, adding that the company has hired new staff during the pandemic instead of laying people off. Vexus' expansion is expected to bring new fiber connectivity to more than 50,000 homes before the end of 2020. It also plans to open new storefront locations in several markets.

Doing Good: On Monday, **Comcast** will salute military community employees from across the company during the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Bristol Motor Speedway. Among those recognized are 23 employees actively serving in the National Guard who are responding to the current crisis. Xfinity will replace its logo that typically adorns each windshield with these Comcast employees' names and a patriotic red, white and blue design. Comcast plans to make donations in each Dash 4 Cash race market that reaffirms their companywide commitment of connecting families, veterans and seniors to the digital tools necessary for navigating these challenging times.

Press Clippings: Now isn't the easiest time to be hunting for a job. Just ask former **Charter** communications, svp *Alex Dudley*, who was featured in a *NY Times* piece on how hiring has dried up during the pandemic for even the well connected. "I had three or four different things in various stages of discussions, and then in mid-March it all just evaporated," he said. Now, he said, "there's just nothing out there." After the article was published, Dudley posted a thank-you on **LinkedIn** for all the people who reached out to help, commiserate or offer support. "I have been constantly and consistently amazed by just how many people have been willing to help in ways big and small throughout this process," he wrote.

Hand-Filing at the FCC: Need to hand file documents with the **FCC**? There's a new address and closing time for such filings. Effective upon publication in the Federal Register, hand-carried documents are to be filed at the Commission's office located at 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. After COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, this will be the only location where hand-carried paper filings for the FCC will be accepted—and only from 8am-4pm, Monday-Friday. The FCC is gearing up to relocate to its new HQ on L Street in Northeast DC later this year.

Programming: **Discovery** and **Science Channel** will return Saturday for the rescheduled launch of SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule at 2pm ET. If bad weather strikes again, the two will go live with coverage of Sunday's 2pm ET launch attempt. -- **HGTV** ordered 16 additional eps of "Home Town," which has attracted more than 30.4mln total viewers in its current season. -- **Charter** is celebrating Pride Month in June with an extensive list of Spectrum On Demand movies highlighting LGBTQ issues and characters, including "Milk," "Moonlight" and "The Birdcage."

People: **Freeform** has a new president in *Tara Duncan*. She joins June 8 from her overall deal at **Hulu**, where she has curated projects such as an adaptation of *Zakiya Dalila Harris'* novel, "The Other Black Girl." Before Hulu, she was a senior creative executive at **Netflix** overseeing "Orange is the New Black." She replaces *Tom Ascheim*, who left the network last month to join **WarnerMedia** as pres, global kids, young adults and classics—a role that includes oversight of **Cartoon Network**, **Boomerang** and **Adult Swim**. -- Sports tech venture capital firm **SeventySix Capital** added former cable exec *Michael Schreiber* as a general partner. Schreiber served as the chief content officer at **Altice USA** and pres, **Altice USA News**. Before that he was svp, content acquisition for **Comcast**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

What Would You Do for a Million Dollars?

Nobody likes a cheater, but **AMC** is asking viewers to take a second look at one scandal that rocked all of England with "Quiz." Premiering Sunday at 10pm, the series chronicles how *Major Ingram (Matthew Macfayden)*, his wife *Diana (Sian Clifford)* and accomplice *Tecwen Whittock (Michael Jibson)* were accused of cheating their way to winning one million pounds on the quiz show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" in 2001. When Ingram read aloud the right answer to a given question, either his wife or Whittock would cough, seemingly to signal that was the one he should choose. Due to the popularity of the game show at the time, the scandal rocked many throughout Britain, and part of that is due to the country's culture around pub games and trivia. "The British have a keen sense of fairness. We really don't like it when people try to bend or break the rules, which I think is in part what led to media furor that erupted following Charles' performance in the hot seat," producer *Dan Winch* told **CFX**. Winch and fellow producer *Alice Pearse* kept in mind those who may have no knowledge of the scandal in mind when crafting the series, and are hoping all viewers will be shocked by the way in which evidence was gathered and presented. "We focus on actions and details which haven't been publicly disclosed in the way the final verdict was," Winch said. It's no secret that the pair were convicted and given prison sentences, but Winch and Pearse kept their opinions on the couple's guilt out of it when putting the series together. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide whether they should have been charged. "Our expectation is that viewers themselves might find themselves reflecting on their perceptions of the Ingrams, and questioning the circumstances which led to them being found guilty," Pearse said. — *Sara Winegardner*

Reviews: "Defending Jacob," series finale, streaming Friday, **AppleTV+**. This 8-ep series about the murder of a student in suburban Boston started slowly, but the stakes have risen significantly, leading to the May 29 finale. We'll limit details, hoping those who've not seen "Defending Jacob" will jump in. Based on a novel of the same name by *William Landay*, it's much more than a murder story, it's a commentary about modern-day families, particularly how much family members hide from each other. And we're not talking only about teens hiding social media posts from their parents. You'll see. — "Trigonometry," streaming from Friday, **HBO Max**. It's obvious from the title that this limited series about a couple and their flat mate in London is well named. As soon as lanky *Ray (Ariane Labed)* enters the flat, she has to squirm her way around *Kieran (Gary Carr)* to pass in the hallway. As he watches her after she passes, you know it's not a disinterested glance. And since his live-in girlfriend *Gemma (Thalissa Teixeira)* is gone most of the day, the arrangement seems dangerous. *Ray, 30*, is a retired Olympian, and has a lot of time on her hands. After those details come out, however, the way each character is explored and then how the three interact with each other is far subtler. And rewarding. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (05/18/20-05/24/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.976	2,998
MSNBC	0.585	1,796
CNN	0.430	1,322
HGTV	0.394	1,210
TLC	0.393	1,207
A&E	0.349	1,073
TBSC	0.312	959
USA	0.273	840
FOOD	0.273	839
HIST	0.264	813
HALL	0.261	803
DISC	0.260	798
ID	0.219	674
TNT	0.212	651
FX	0.210	647
INSP	0.200	616
BRAVO	0.191	586
TVLAND	0.191	586
HMM	0.183	563
AMC	0.165	506
SYFY	0.162	499
ADSM	0.158	485
ESPN	0.154	473
GSN	0.151	463
NICK	0.146	449
WETV	0.136	419
NAN	0.136	418
TRAVEL	0.134	411
FRFM	0.132	406
NATGEO	0.130	399
APL	0.121	371
LIFE	0.118	362
MTV	0.116	357
PARA	0.114	352
OXY	0.114	349
SUN	0.106	327
DSJR	0.104	321
LMN	0.104	319
NKJR	0.104	319
COM	0.101	310
DSNY	0.100	308

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

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AD SPACE DEADLINE: July 7

Publication Date: July 22, 2020

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