

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — September 18, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 181

No Pressure: O’Rielly Says No White House Conversations on his Positions

Michael O’Rielly appeared before the **House Communications** subcommittee Thursday in what may have been his last as an **FCC** commissioner. He didn’t offer any salacious tidbits on why his nomination for a third term was suddenly withdrawn by President *Trump*.

“I was informed that the president was withdrawing my nomination, as is his prerogative, by a very short phone call,” O’Rielly said in his written testimony. “I had no conversations with the White House on withdrawing my nomination prior to that point and none since.”

While there’s been speculation that the about face came after he publicly questioned Trump’s executive order requiring the **NTIA** to petition the FCC and ask it to re-evaluate the scope of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, O’Rielly said there were no conversations on his positions or demands to support any particular action. This week, Trump nominated *Nathan Simington* to the agency. A senior adviser at NTIA, Simington helped draft NTIA’s 230 petition.

Much of the rest of the hearing centered on what House Democrats on the subcmte have deemed to be FCC chmn *Ajit Pai*’s failure to do everything in his power to support the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his testimony, Pai highlighted the work and accomplishments of the agency over the last four years, including the amount of spectrum the FCC has made available through auctions and the speed at which the Commission distributed dollars to support telehealth following the passing of the CARES Act. But subcmte chair *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) still had questions as to why the FCC didn’t do more to support the E-Rate program or get more people connected to broadband through the Lifeline program during the pandemic.

Pai has repeatedly argued that the Communications Act prevents the FCC from using E-Rate funds for anything other than supporting connectivity in classrooms. Democrats have argued that Pai could use the agency’s emergency powers to change the rules in order to authorize funding to foster the use of devices and broadband at home.

“You have before you the means and opportunity to help millions of people at one of our nation’s greatest moments of need and I really encourage you, Mr Chairman, to step up to the moment that history has presented you.”



Hosted by ACA Connects & NCTC

★ THE INDEPENDENT Reimagined SHOW
Sept. 29 - Oct. 1

TRAILBLAZING IN A
DIGITAL WORLD

Register Now!
TheIndependentShow.org

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher, Cablefax & Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com ● Senior Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● VP, Sales: Mike Farina, 203.218.6480, mfarina@accessintel.com ● Sales Exec: Albert Nassour, 917.545.3129, anassour@accessintel.com ● Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com ● Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,749.00/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

Doyle said.

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau did open a second funding year 2020 filing window on Wednesday to allow schools to request additional E-Rate funding specifically to address increased on-campus bandwidth needs, but that money is still tied to the improvement of school networks rather than those at students' homes.

Democrats in Congress are continuing to take matters into their own hands by attempting to pass legislation that would direct E-Rate funds towards the support of connectivity at home. Sens *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Chris Van Hollen* (D-MD) held a press conference Thursday where the pair called for \$4bln in funding to be included in the next COVID-19 relief package to ensure all K-12 students have adequate connectivity and devices.

Discovery Almost Ready For Streaming: It's almost time for another entrant into the streaming space, with **Discovery** pres/CEO *David Zaslav* saying the company will "be coming to the market very soon with our plan." Speaking at a Goldman Sachs investor conference Thursday, Zaslav said the company's upcoming streaming service is the most important thing Discovery has done since he joined the company in 2007. Considering his tenure included the \$14.6bln purchase of Scripps Networks Interactive, those are pretty big words. "We've been getting ready for it for years, it's one of the reasons why we got into local sports," he said. "It's the reason that we did Scripps, because we own all that content globally." Zaslav said that Discovery's offering will differentiate itself from other large players in the market because Discovery is one of the few companies that owns all its content, and has been "aggressively" driving original content. "One of the keys is getting partners to help. We've been very quietly over the last year working aggressively and getting all of our stuff together, and we're quite close," he said. And it may be a good time to launch a new offering. Discovery just wrapped its upfront, and Zaslav said it "will be a surprise on the upside." "For us at least, COVID has really helped us. We've been able to produce content when others haven't been able to, our share is up in the US," he said. Discovery is expecting to see ad sales drop by 10% or less in 3Q, improving from the 14% drop over the last three months. Discovery reports 3Q earnings Nov 5.

Cogeco Still Not Biting on Altice USA, Rogers Bid: The battle to acquire **Cogeco** rages on, and **Altice USA** and **Rogers** are claiming their offer was rejected without the directors or independent directors of Cogeco undertaking any appropriate process. No independent committee was created to take a deeper look at the offer, and it was not forwarded on to Cogeco's Strategic Opportunities committee. "In simple terms, the boards and their independent directors failed to fulfill their most basic duties in representing the shareholders they are duty bound to represent and protect," Altice USA CEO *Dexter Goei* and Rogers pres/CEO *Joe Natale* said in a Tuesday letter to *James Cherry*,

We are so proud of our industry and the many ways companies are responding to the pandemic. Free internet, fresh content, employee safety and much more.

The Cablefax Editorial Team is reporting on vital industry updates every day. We want to hear from you so please reach out to share your news and stories.

Content. Community. Daily.

Amy Maclean, Editorial Director,
amaclean@accessintel.com or 301.354.1760

The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?: With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become the norm? **Saravali Pictures** is the first out of the gate, announcing "Trolls World Tour" will be available April 10 for a rental. Other in-release movie titles are set to be available as soon as this Friday. The movies will be available on **Comcast, Sky** and a "broad range of on-demand partners." Titles to be made available include "The Man" and "Emma" with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 in the US.

Tuesday — March 17, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First* Volume 31 / No. 050

For Now: Providers Set Aside Disputes During Coronavirus Outbreak

As they face the common enemy that is the coronavirus pandemic, **Cox Media Group** and **DISH** have set aside their retrans dispute for now so that DISH can resume its carriage of 10 CMG stations in New York, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Louisiana, California, Mississippi and Idaho. No word on how long the truce will last.

Cablefax Daily™

Friday — March 13, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First* Volume 31 / No. 050

New Normal: Companies Roll Out Contingency Plans in Face of Covid-19

With a growing number of students and employees working from home, it's mission critical for the nation's broadband providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Operators big and small are up-ending their day-to-day operations to ensure service to their customers.

Wednesday — March 18, 2020 *What the Industry Reads First*

Covering Covid-19: Content Companies Step Up Efforts

Programmers are shuffling schedules to respond to the coronavirus crisis. **The Weather Channel** is airing live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content during the school closure. **Pledge** is airing live programming during the school closure. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and how to stay safe during the pandemic.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Keep Americans Connected Pledge**, agreeing to take specific steps to keep Americans connected during the pandemic. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications**, **Middle**

lead director of the boards of Cogeco and **Cogeco Communications**. “We do not understand how you as a board member of Cogeco Inc and Cogeco Communications Inc, with the responsibility to act in the interest of all the stakeholders, could have behaved in this unacceptable manner.” Cherry responded, arguing that Altice and Rogers are trying to confuse investors in their continued pursuits to purchase Cogeco. “From the outset, you have engaged in bad faith tactics, some of which created confusion in the market,” Cherry said. He went on to say that Altice and Rogers presented their proposal with a promise to respond to any questions Cogeco had, but went on to publicly announce the proposal the next morning without warning. Cherry also said that while the announcement said that the support of the Audet family was necessary to complete the transaction, Altice and Rogers did not state that the Audet family had already rejected the proposal. “We can only surmise that this was done with a view to misleading investors and increasing the stock price in an attempt to put pressure on the family to sell,” Cherry wrote.

USTelecom Joins Broadband Initiative: US Telecom is joining the “K-12 Bridge to Broadband” initiative, launched by NCTA in partnership with **EducationSuperHighway** earlier this month. The national effort is working to connect more students for remote and hybrid learning by increasing home connectivity solutions. **Comcast, Charter, Cox, GCI, Mediacom, Midco, Sjoberg’s and Vyve Broadband** all signed on at launch.

TVSquared and Blockgraph Launch New Solution: TV measurement and attribution company **TVSquared** partnered with audience connectivity and authentication platform **Blockgraph** to launch a new cross-channel measurement solution. The companies say advertisers will be able to have a trusted and connected way to accurately and cost-efficiently measure reach and frequency across linear, addressable, VOD and digital video environments.

Starry Unveils Single-Home Tech: Fiber wireless provider **Starry** unveiled its updated single-family home receiver **Starry Comet**, currently in limited trials. The tech allows the company to serve consumers in single-family homes and smaller apartment buildings, expanding Starry’s footprint and growth into suburban and exurban communities.

NBC Sports Restructures: **NBC Sports** is reshuffling some of its people in order to centralize operations. **NBC Sports, Olympics and GOLF** scheduling, planning and rights management are centralizing under *David Preschlack*, NBC Sports Regional Networks pres and NBC Sports Group’s evp, content strategy. *Tom Knapp* was named evp, NBC Sports programming, reporting to Preschlack. He was previously evp, partnerships and programming for GOLF. *Wendy Bass* and *Justin Byczek* have been named svp, programming & rights management, reporting to Knapp. Bass held the title of svp, rights integration, and Byczek was most recently svp, consumer engagement. *Jon Miller* is now assisting the leadership team on acquisitions, development and programming, while still contributing to affiliate and distribution teams. He was previously pres, programming, NBC Sports and NBCSN.

Doing Good: **Comcast** announced a multiyear program to launch more than 1K WiFi connected “Lift Zones” in community centers across the country, working to provide connectivity and hundreds of hours of educational and digital skills content. The initiative is designed to complement the company’s Internet Essentials program.

Distribution: **AMC Networks** and **Twitch** teamed up for a new, live-streaming channel focused on the “The Walking Dead” universe. **TWD Universe Channel** will feature live-streaming original TWD programming exclusively on Twitch beginning Saturday. The channel will have a live show from 7:30pm, followed by a watchalong during episode premieres, then continue that conversation from 11pm-12am every Sunday night. The channel will launch with approx 12 hours of original content every week. -- The **National Hot Rod Association** and **Fox Sports** struck a multiyear rights extension for the NHRA Mello Yello Drag Racing series competition across **Fox, FS1 and FS2**.

Just for Fun: The **Rocky Mountain Cable Association** is organizing a drive-in screening of “The Goonies” on Saturday at 6:30pm in Lone Tree, CO. Tickets cost \$20 a car for non-members, and it’s free for RMCA members.

Programming: **ESPN** will present a Monday Night Football MegaCast on Sept 21 at 8:15pm, celebrating the NFL in Las Vegas. The matchup between the Saints and Raiders will be simulcast across **ABC**, and **ESPN Deportes** will have the Spanish-language presentation of the game. **ESPN2** will have a different presentation, featuring conversation with stars from the NFL and entertainment, music and sport industries. -- With the US Supreme Court again hearing all oral arguments for the upcoming October session via teleconference, **C-SPAN** pledged to livestream every one on its website and permanently archive it there. Key arguments will air live on its television networks. **C-SPAN** will also deliver the audio feed to the Capitol Hill hub for distribution to other accredited news organizations.

People: *Byron Allen’s Entertainment Studios* promoted *Patricia Wilson* to evp of network **Justicecentral.TV**. In her new position, she’ll remain ep and showrunner for all five of the Entertainment Studios court series currently in production.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Peacock's 'Departure' Beefs Up Original Content

NBCU's streamer **Peacock** is building up its slate of original content, with its newest series "Departure" arriving on the service Thursday. The six-part, Candian-UK thriller follows the investigation into the strange disappearance of a passenger plane that vanished en route to London from New York. Sounds like "Lost" or "Manifest," perhaps? *Departure* differentiates itself in that the mystery focuses far less on the flight and passengers, but rather follows the investigation into the flight. Led by crash investigator Kendra Malley (played by Emmy-winner *Archie Panjabi*) and her boss and mentor Howard Lawson (*Christopher Plummer*), the team is racing the clock to track the missing plane and discover why it crashed in the first place. The show follows an overarching mystery, including subplots focusing on familial relationships, global terrorism and xenophobia against Muslims. Not to mention the suspicious pilot leading a double life or the sole survivor floating on a raft with someone else's bloodstains. The all-star cast also includes *Kris Holden-Ried*, *Claire Forlani* and *Alexandre Bourgeois*. *Departure* is a welcome addition to the slate of Peacock original content, many of which had to be delayed to 2021 due to the production shutdowns because of the coronavirus pandemic. NBCU pre-bought the series from Canadian broadcaster Global, with production completed before COVID-19 took hold. The show is currently in production for Season 2, though it's not confirmed if the second season will fly to Peacock. Peacock launched nationwide July 15 after a soft launch to **Comcast** Xfinity customers in April. The early preview included just a handful of originals, largely kid's programming such as animated series "Where's Waldo?" At its nationwide launch, original programming was significantly increased, with further originals continuing to roll out through the end of the year. – *Mollie Cahillane*

Reviews: "Frontline: The Choice 2020: Trump vs. Biden," Tuesday, **PBS** (check listings for time). One of the goals of this interwoven story of the two presidential candidates is to explain to viewers what drives them. Perhaps that insight will help viewers choose whom they want leading the nation during the pandemic. Regardless, the mission is accomplished. This 2-hour special is prime storytelling. Bravo to director *Michael Kirk* for creating portraits that are deep and, at times, fascinating, loaded with excellent footage and myriad talking heads, including *John Bolton* and *Rudy Giuliani*, but also some newer celebs, such as *Mary Trump*. *Joe Biden's* sister, *Valerie Biden Owens*, provides a terrific story of her mother threatening to knock the bonnet off a nun. More interesting, perhaps, than the interviews with big names, are reminiscences from friends and acquaintances. One of the biggest takeaways: don't judge a child too soon. – Notable: "PBS's Washington Week," check local listings, Friday, **PBS**. Was it planned or serendipity? Moderator *Robert Costa* not only covered *Bob Woodward's* new book "Rage" for the *Washington Post*, he also accompanied him on interviews with President Trump. Woodward is the show's special guest Friday. He will take questions from Costa, *Margaret Brennan* of **CBS News** and *Alexi McCammond* of *Axios*, including why he waited to release his recordings of the president. – *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings*
(09/07/20-09/13/20)

Mon-Sun	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	1.051	3,235
TNT	0.719	2,215
ESPN	0.659	2,029
MSNBC	0.643	1,981
HGTV	0.424	1,305
CNN	0.414	1,273
TLC	0.370	1,139
HALL	0.312	961
TBSC	0.282	867
USA	0.247	759
FOOD	0.233	717
HIST	0.231	712
ID	0.224	689
INSP	0.204	629
DISC	0.201	619
FX	0.189	583
TVLAND	0.188	578
NATGEO	0.173	533
HMM	0.172	531
LIFE	0.171	525
NBSCN	0.167	515
A&E	0.167	515
BRAVO	0.154	473
ADSM	0.151	466
BET	0.137	422
WETV	0.137	421
NAN	0.135	414
FRFM	0.135	414
SYFY	0.134	413
GSN	0.131	405
E!	0.123	379
NICK	0.122	375
AMC	0.120	368
TRAVEL	0.115	355
APL	0.113	348
DSNY	0.103	318
MTV	0.101	310
HLN	0.099	304
NKJR	0.091	282
OXY	0.090	278
COM	0.087	268

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

Cablefax Selected by SCTE•ISBE
as Exclusive Partner for the Official Show Daily



Supercharge Your Exposure!

Extend Your Brand And Message Globally.

The Cable-Tec Expo Show Dailies by Cablefax are a valuable resource for keeping attendees and exhibitors informed of upcoming events, as well as clear and concise coverage of the previous day's highlights. Enlightening articles by its well-respected editors are also always a good read and round off the educational content.

- David Atman, President, Lindsay Broadband



Space is selling quickly! Contact Mike Farina at mfarina@accessintel.com • Albert Nassour at anassour@accessintel.com