

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Gone Virtual: Indy Show Hits Screens This Week

The fifteenth annual joint **Independent Show** is going to look a little different this year, but **ACA Connects** and **NCTC** have pivoted to bring a full virtual experience to their members. Kicking off Tuesday, the 2020 Indy Show is themed “Trailblazing in a Digital World.” “Trailblazing is what our members have done and stepped up as they sought to meet the needs during the pandemic, and now in a digital world where everything we seem to do has a digital component to it,” said ACA Connects pres/CEO *Matt Polka*.

With six hours of programming taking place over three days, the show is a bit shorter than the standard four-and-a-half days. “We shortened it so people don’t have to sit in front of their computer screen all day, and tried to pack as much content as we could,” said NCTC pres *Rich Fickle*. In a mix of pre-recorded and live content, each day this year will have a different theme focusing on overall trends in the industry and our world.

Tuesday kicks off with “Big Picture,” which includes economist *Marci Rossell* speaking on the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy and what we can expect going forward. *Spencer Kurn* of **New Street Research** will weigh in on the direct economic outlook for the industry for both video and broadband, and ACA Connects’ evp of membership and finance and chief of staff *John Higginbotham* will head up a panel on retrans consent with **Locast** chief *David Goodfriend*. Day 2’s “Our Country: the election and COVID” features live conversations with Congressman *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) the day after the first presidential debate, which Polka said will help the industry look at “dealing with what could be great upheaval from a policy perspective and policymakers who may have a far different view of regulation of internet providers compared to what we see now.” Attendees can also tune in to a one-on-one with ACA Connects chmn *Patty Boyers* interviewing **FCC** commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* live. Day 3 looks at “Strategies and Lessons Learned,” focusing on pay-TV, OTT and where the changing industry is heading.

This year’s show has a panel featuring 11 industry CEOs. “You can’t do 11 CEOs in-person,” said Fickle, ticking off one of the advantages of going virtual. A priority for both organizations was to, over the course of the Indy Show’s three days, show their gratitude for the hard work their members have done over the last six months to keep customers and communities connected. “What we’ve really tried to do is not replicate the Independent Show that

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we've done in person, because that's just not possible," said Polka. "A lot of that recognition of our members will flow through all three days." And because the event is virtual, more members than ever can attend. Over 500 folks are registered, and Fickle expects an additional 100 or so. According to Polka, there will be virtual attendees who had never attended one of the org's meetings.

And true to Indy Show form, there will be some fun after-hours events with end of day receptions and happy hours, and attendees can even expect some cameos from some of their favorite cable TV shows. "We've got some fun stuff mixed in, but quite frankly it's not in the context of what we'd really like to do with family participation," said Fickle. "We've got suppliers doing fun drop-ins, we'll see somebody from the hit show 'Yellowstone' drop-in and do a little welcome, maybe something from several other well-known shows."

**Netflix Price Increase Coming Soon?:** Jefferies analyst *Brent Thill* believes a **Netflix** price increase is coming sooner rather than later. In a note to investors, Thill suggested the \$1 or \$2 hike is coming in the near- to mid-term. Netflix's last price increase came in Jan 2019 with the company raising the price of its Standard tier from \$10.99/month to \$12.99/month. Thill reiterated his "Outperform" rating on the streaming giant and lifted its price target to \$570 from \$500. "While the stock has hit a bit of a lull post earnings given soft 3Q guidance and a somewhat light summer content slate, we continue to believe Netflix will deliver normalized high double-digit top line growth with sizeable margin expansion over time," Thill said.

**Verizon, AT&T Pay \$127mln for Overcharging Government Customers:** Verizon and AT&T have agreed to pay a combined \$127mln to settle lawsuits claiming they overcharged California and Nevada government customers for wireless services. Verizon will pay \$76mln and AT&T \$51mln to settle the claims that they knowingly ignored cost-saving requirements included in contracts offering wireless services to state and local government users in California, Nevada and other states. Sprint and T-Mobile previously reached settlements totaling \$11.7mln. The defendants in the suits have denied liability.

**Roku Unveils Upcoming Streaming Lineup:** Roku announced two additions to its streaming product lineup Monday as well as a new version of its operating system. The redesigned Roku Ultra (\$99.99) is designed for avid streamers and now boasts a 50% better wireless range and Bluetooth support. The Roku Streambar (\$129.99) combines the company's streaming technology with premium sound capabilities, and includes a voice remote. Both devices are expected to ship in October. The operating system will extend support for Apple Airplay 2 and Apple Homekit to Roku's 4K-capable devices by 2021. It will also support Apple Siri

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voice controls in addition to its existing support for Amazon's Alexa and Google Assistant. Roku will be rolling the new OS out to devices in the coming weeks. It's also adding a new dedicated **The Roku Channel** mobile app for iOS and Android users soon.

**Road to the World Series:** ESPN will exclusively televise seven of the eight 2020 MLB Wild Card Series games from Tuesday through Friday. ABC, ESPN and ESPN2 will combine to televise up to 21 games in four days, including seven games on Wednesday. All games will also be available to stream via the ESPN app.

**More Time for FCC Telehealth Participants:** The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau extended the deadline for COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding recipients to purchase eligible devices and implement eligible services from Sept 30 to Dec 31. The extension will give providers more time to purchase the items they need to provide telehealth services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

**T. Howard Streams Dinner:** The annual T. Howard Diversity Awards Dinner will take place virtually on Wednesday at 7pm ET, with special guests including Tracee Ellis Ross, Trevor Noah and John Leguizamo. It will be streamed exclusively on Fuse Media's YouTube channel. Registration is not required and the event is open to everyone. The dinner was originally set to take place March 25 and was then postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**Charter Names Spectrum Scholars:** Charter announced the 20 college juniors who will make up its inaugural class of Spectrum Scholars, the company's two-year educational and mentorship initiative for underrepresented students with financial need. Each student will receive a \$20K scholarship, a Charter professional mentor and the opportunity to explore an internship with the company. The scholarship recipients will be introduced to the program via a virtual professional development series beginning on Thursday.

**Armstrong Partners With Verimatrix:** Pennsylvania-based Armstrong deployed Verimatrix's Video Content Authority System. Armstrong recently incorporated a TiVo platform into its set-top boxes, and the VCAS encryption solution will allow it to easily integrate as many streaming options as possible.

**Amazon, Howard Continuing Entertainment Diversity Program:** Howard University and Amazon Studios announced a second year of the Howard Entertainment program. The experience is designed to diversity the entertainment industry by creating a pipeline for underrepresented populations to train and study alongside industry executives. Applications will open Monday with the program set to restart in January.

**Ratings:** Fox News won during coverage of President Trump's nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the US Supreme Court, delivering 3.6mln total viewers and 557K in the 25-54 demographic from 5-6pm ET on Sept 26. CNN followed with 1.096mln total viewers and MSNBC fell to third with 894K total viewers.

**Honors:** Nova Southeastern University's H Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship is inducting Hotwire CEO/co-founder Kristin Johnson Karp into its 2020 Entrepreneur and Business Hall of Fame. She'll be inducted alongside Hard Rock International chmn James Allen and Dex Imaging CEO Dan Doyle Jr during a virtual ceremony on Oct 26.

**Distribution:** Cinedigm's Bloody Disgusting streaming channel will launch exclusively on The Roku Channel Tuesday. The channel will serve as a destination for premium horror content.

**Programming:** BET picked up legal thriller "Sacrifice." The series is based on the movie of the same name, which launched on BET+ in December as the service's first original film. -- HBO renewed "Real Time With Bill Maher" for two more seasons. The show will be on the network through 2022. -- Nickelodeon greenlit "Brendar the Barbarian," a live-action puppet comedy series from co-creators Mike Mitchell ("Trolls") and puppeteer Drew Massey ("Sid the Science Kid"). It is slated to premiere in 2021. -- "Peacemaker" is coming to HBO Max with a straight-to-series order for the first eight episodes of the show. The DC show will explore the origins of the Peacemaker character from the upcoming "The Suicide Squad" film. - HBO Max made a direct-to-series order for "Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin," aimed at a brand new generation of Liars fans (based on the bestselling book series by Sara Shepard). The original "Pretty Little Liars" series by Warner Horizon Television for Freeform/ABC Family is treated as canon, with the reboot miles away from Rosewood. -- Nickelodeon greenlit a third season of "The Casagrandes."

**People:** Cox Enterprises named Jennifer Hightower svp, general counsel and corporate secretary, effective Oct 4. Hightower has worked in the legal function of Cox Communications for more than 23 years. Prior to joining Cox, Hightower served in various legal positions at BellSouth Corporation, RaceTrac Petroleum and Drew, Eckl & Farnham.