

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Dark Day: Powell Describes Capitol Chaos as Unimaginable

The world watched via television networks and broadband connections as the US Capitol was breached by president *Trump* supporters Wednesday as the House and Senate debated a move by some Republicans to overturn election results.

“This is a sad and deeply disturbing moment for our nation,” **NCTA** pres/CEO *Michael Powell* told **CFX**. “The storming of the Capitol is something I could not imagine in my wildest imagination. Nothing is more important to our country than a working democracy and what we are witnessing today is a bleak moment in our history.” Powell is a former **FCC** chairman and the son of retired four-star general *Colin Powell*, Secretary of State under *George W. Bush*.

NAB pres/CEO *Gordon Smith*, a former Republican senator representing Oregon, also reacted to Wednesday’s violence. “We are saddened and disheartened by the actions unfolding in our nation’s capital. To the journalists risking their lives to bring this unprecedented scene to Americans across the nation, stay safe and vigilant,” he said in a statement. **ACA Connects** pres/CEO *Matt Polka* took to Twitter to emphasize the importance of working with both sides to solve problems. “Today we all must stand against violence, cancel the hatred, and reach out to all extending a hand of grace and mercy,” he said.

Visibly shaken reporters and politicians appeared on

news networks and **Twitter**. When the House and Senate went out of session as a group broke into the Capitol, **C-SPAN** continued with live coverage from its studio (*Greta Brawner* hosting) mixing in interviews with reporters inside and outside the Capitol, members of Congress, live video from its camera and pool cameras, and social media posts from reporters and members. As the protests heated up, **CNN** cut away from the Senate floor to document the scene outside the Capitol. **Fox News**, **CNN** and **MSNBC** all had coverage from inside and outside the Capitol as the riots continued, and all three covered President-Elect *Joe Biden*’s speech to the American people shortly after 4pm, with split-screen footage showing the current scenes at the Capitol. **Telemundo**, **Univision**, **Newsmax**, **One America News** and virtually every other channel with a regular news presence were also covering Wednesday’s developments. And in the midst of all it, networks interrupted to report that *Jon Ossoff* has beat *David Perdue* in Georgia, assuring a Democratic majority in the Senate. **CNN** and **MSNBC** both made coverage available to stream for free.

Networks that weren’t interrupting linear programming were still reacting. **BET** posted a point of view piece at **BET.com**, sharing the words of Black legislators. Among those featured were Rep *Keith Ellison* (D-MN), who tweeted an image of people running through the building, and Rep *Yvette Clarke* (D-NY), who tweeted, “This is domestic terrorism. Period, full stop.”

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The pandemic has many people working from home, but fear of possible problems Wednesday sparked even more telework. A small NCTA skeleton staff had been going into its HQ, a stone's throw from the Capitol. However, the association closed the office Wednesday ahead of the protests and will keep it closed the rest of the week. Various area business have also closed, including **Comcast's** Chinatown retail store.

The FCC also has been working remotely. FCC commish *Brendan Carr* took to Twitter to condemn mob violence, saying it is never acceptable. "I don't care what that someone is wearing, what cause they think they're pursuing, or how successful they think they've been. That matters zero. I condemn mob violence with no caveat or hedge," Carr tweeted. His words were echoed by outgoing FCC chmn *Ajit Pai*. "We must be governed by the rule of law, not the rule of the mob. Law and order must be restored and democracy must be respected," Pai tweeted.

Senate Commerce chmn *Roger Wicker* (D-MS) and House Commerce chmn *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) both tweeted that they were safe. Wicker, who said earlier in the day that he would vote to accept the results of the electoral college, thanked the US Capitol Police and federal law enforcement for their work. At around 3:30pm ET, Pallone tweeted he was under lockdown orders at the Capitol complex. "I've never seen anything like this horrific attack but I want to assure you—we will carry out our constitutional duty and certify the results of the presidential election."

DISH DESIGNATED ENTITY UPDATE

DISH said in an SEC filing that it entered into a purchase agreement with **Northstar Manager** and **Northstar Spectrum** on Dec 30. The deal was pursuant to which **American AWS-3 Wireless II** purchased 80% of Northstar Manager's Class B common interests in Northstar Spectrum. The news comes less than two months after the **FCC** released an order on remand determining that **Northstar Wireless** and **SNR Wireless** were ineligible for \$3.3bln in AWS-3 bidding credits they won in 2015 due to the agency's determination that they remain under DISH's de facto control. Northstar Wireless and SNR Wireless have appealed the FCC's order to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

STRONG HEADED TO SKY

Sky group CEO *Jeremy Darroch* will, after 13 years in the position, move from his current role to become the company's exec chmn. *Dana Strong* has been chosen as his successor, and will report to Comcast chmn/CEO *Brian Roberts*. Strong most recently served as Comcast Cable's pres, consumer services. "Her global experience and vision coupled with her leadership and track record at some of the largest media and telecommunications companies in the world make her the perfect leader for Sky," Roberts said in a statement. A replacement for Strong has yet to be determined, and her team will be reporting to Comcast Cable pres/CEO *Dave Watson* in the meantime. Darroch will serve as exec chmn through 2021.

FCC ASKS FOR INPUT ON TELEHEALTH PROGRAM

The **FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau** issued a request for comment on how to administer a second round of the agency's COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The program received an additional \$249.95mln in support as part of Congress's recently-

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.

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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 **sal 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 **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 dispute 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

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** time during each hour of live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content. **Pledge** due to school closure. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form, scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken **Pa's Keep Americans Connected Pledge**, agreeing to take specific steps to keep Americans 60 days. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications, Mid**

passed stimulus legislation. The FCC is seeking input on the metrics that should be used to evaluate applications for this round of funding, how the Commission should treat applications that were filed during the initial funding round provided under the CARES Act and additional program improvements.

ROKU SURPASSES 50 MILLION MILESTONE

Roku announced preliminary 4Q results Wednesday, revealing it counted 51.2mln active accounts at the end of 2020. That's up from 36.9mln accounts at the end of 2019. Viewers streamed an estimated 17bln hours in the fourth quarter for a total of 58.7bln hours in 2020, a 55% YOY increase for the quarter and for the full year. "Roku is filled with smart and dedicated people who work every day to create the future of TV, with a focus on innovation and creating the best possible experience for our viewers," Roku said in a blog post. "We celebrate this milestone with all of you." As a thank you for all of the support it has received, Roku is giving away 50 Roku Ultra devices.

T-MOBILE ADDS 5.5MLN POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

T-Mobile hit a milestone in 2020, posting its highest postpaid net additions in company history at 5.5mln for the full year, increasing total customer count to a record-high 102.1mln. In preliminary numbers from 4Q, the company posted 1.7mln total net additions, 1.6mln postpaid net additions, and 824K postpaid phone net adds. T-Mobile said its 5G network is now reaching 280mln people and covering 106mln, beating its year-end goal to cover 100mln Americans.

GRACENOTE LAUNCHES SPORTS WIDGETS

Gracenote, a **Nielsen** company, is launching a live sports solution designed to help smart TV and auto manufacturers enable new fan experiences in the home and on-the-go. Consumer electronics manufacturers and automakers will now be able to integrate real-time team statistics, recent game results and life updates to TV screens and auto infotainment systems. At launch, Gracenote's Sports Widgets will cover major North American sports leagues including the **NBA** and **NFL** and international football leagues like the English Premier League. Additional coverage will be made throughout the year.

O'RIELLY FINDS NEW HOME

Former **FCC** commish *Michael O'Rielly* will join the **Hudson Institute's** Center for the Economics of the Internet as a visiting fellow. O'Rielly recently ended his career with the federal government, serving on the FCC as a Republican commissioner from 2013 until the end of 2020. Prior to that, he spent two decades in key policy and leadership roles across Congress. "I'm grateful to Dr. [Harold] Furchtgott-Roth and Hudson Institute for the opportunity to continue pursuing work that helps shape sound telecommunications and technology policy through the center," O'Rielly said in a statement.

SUDDENLINK-COX MEDIA GROUP

Cox Media Group warned Wednesday that **Suddenlink** may soon lose stations in six market—Tulsa, OK; Memphis, TN; Spokane, WA; Eureka, CA; Greenville-Greenwood, MS; and Alexandria, LA. No expiration date was given. Meanwhile,

there is still no agreement between **Mediacom** and **TEGNA**. Sixteen TEGNA station have been dark on the MSO since 5pm ET Dec 31.

NAB UPS COVID COMMITMENTS

NAB has joined the **COVID Collaborative**, a non-partisan group of experts and organizations in public health, education and the economy working on unified action against the COVID-19 pandemic. NAB pres/CEO *Gordon Smith* will serve on the Collaborative's national advisory council. NAB also plans to unveil a toolkit early this year providing the resources and messaging local journalists need to effectively educate their audiences on vaccine distribution.

RATINGS

ESPN was the top-rated cable net for the final week of 2020 in both prime and total day, pulling in 6.472mln in prime and 2.428mln in total day. In prime, **Fox News** came second with 1.77mln viewers, followed by **CNN** with 1.594mln and **MSNBC** with 1.43mln. In total day, ESPN came second with 1.249mln viewers, then Fox News with 1.133mln viewers and MSNBC with 1.015mln.

PROGRAMMING

A new "90 Day Fiance" series is heading to **discovery+** on Feb 8. "Love Games" will follow 24 couples from the universe going head-to-head in an elimination-style series. **OWN** announced a new slate of "SuperSoul" to stream exclusively on discovery+ starting later this month. Audio versions will be available as podcasts the week after each stream and OWN will air the interviews later this year.

PEOPLE

Michele Barney is joining **Discovery** as its pres, affiliate distribution. Barney, who last served as **AT&T's** svp, content and programming, will head the strategic oversight and distribution of Discovery's network portfolio in the US and Canada. *Eric Phillips* is leaving the post to become pres, global distribution strategy. In this newly created role, Phillips will lead the strategy and relationship management for global digital platforms, with a focus on direct-to-consumer partnerships for discovery+. Both Barney and Phillips report to *Bruce Campbell*, chief development, distribution & legal officer. – **NBCU** chmn, global advertising and partnerships *Linda Yaccarino* has been named chair of the **Ad Council's** board. She succeeds **Facebook** CRO *David Fischer* and will serve in the role until June 30, 2022. – **Scripps** named three media veterans to lead its national networks distribution team. *Brad Samuels* will lead partnership development efforts as vp, distribution partnerships and strategy; *Damian Riordan* will lead broadcast partnerships as vp, broadcast distribution; and *Yvonne Haugh* will guide operations tied to affiliate relations as vp, distribution and affiliate operations. All three will report to *Jeffrey Wolf*, who Scripps recently named chief distribution officer for the national networks business. All of these changes are effective upon the close of Scripps' acquisition of **ION**.

Think about that for a minute...

Welcome To 2021!

Commentary by Steve Effros

There were times when there was serious question whether we were ever going to get out of 2020, but here we are! The Dick Clark New Year's Eve marathon is over, the ball has dropped, and guess what? In the area this column covers; video, broadband, internet and the like, things haven't changed very much. A quick review and some suggestions may be in order as we start the new year and a new administration in Washington.

If you thought I was just kidding, or overdoing my focus on "Section 230" for the past half year, think again. The issue of whether and how we regulate or reformulate the biggest internet players, Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple and the like is going to be front and center in 2021. We reached a certain level of unreality last month as the outgoing President tried to marry a wholesale elimination of Section 230 with the totally unrelated National Defense Authorization Act. That veto effort was overwhelmingly over-ridden on a bipartisan basis by both houses of Congress. But the issue is far from over.

You will remember that Section 230 protects the edge provider platforms from liability for things posted by others. There is close to unanimous agreement from all sides that this total immunity along with the ability to curate certain types of material just doesn't work anymore. But what changes should be made to accomplish varying goals is going to be a hot topic in the days ahead. A change in administrations just changes where the impetus is coming from for which adjustments. A wholesale elimination of the provision is unlikely because it would essentially destroy the current business plan for "social media." While I might think that's a good idea for the mental wellbeing of all of us, it's politically a non-starter.

But the "Section 230" debate is inevitably going to raise the larger question of modernizing the whole concept of antitrust law. Is it time to just acknowledge that some companies have simply gotten too big, too powerful, too

wealthy to control? If so, what do we do? And I might add, particularly in our industry, should there be limits on the salary and additional compensation for top executives? Looking at some of the folks we know it would certainly seem so to me! Again, I predict that this issue will start being raised in the year ahead, if not by government, then by corporate boards.

And on the other end of that spectrum, what about the prices we all pay for the services now acknowledged to have become essential; particularly broadband. The whole "net neutrality" thing will be back this year as soon as the new administration can seat a new FCC Chair. But as I've noted many times, the issue is not what all the bumper sticker arguments are about, "blocking" etc.,. It's about rate regulation. The problem with that one is even if rate regulation is authorized, no one knows how to do it!

So as you can see, it's going to be a fun-filled year! But let's get practical for a moment. One of the things you should do right now is take a look at your credit card and bank accounts for all those "recurring charges" that have started to pile up. That's especially true with all the "a la carte" video services you decided to sample last year. If you don't use them anymore, or have watched what you want from their libraries, remember, you're still paying for them! Welcome to 2021.



Steve

T:202-630-2099
steve@effros.com

(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



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