

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Farewell Tour: Pai Reflects on Tenure, Trump, Transparency

Outgoing **FCC** chairman *Ajit Pai* has been giving plenty of exit interviews in his final days at the Commission. The ultimate goodbye will be next Wednesday's FCC Open Meeting, his last before his Jan 20 departure from the agency.

The meeting agenda is pretty benign, often the case in the final days before a new administration steps in. Pai's legacy over four years is highlighted, of course, by the Restoring Internet Freedom Order that reversed a 2015 FCC order regulating ISPs under Title II. A man was sentenced to more than 18 months in prison for threatening to kill Pai's family over the repeal. While net neutrality will forever be linked with Pai's name, he'll also be remembered for spectrum initiatives, including the ongoing C-band auction that has topped \$80 billion in gross proceeds, as well as media modernization efforts, which included streamlining the program carriage complaint process, eliminating 30 day-notice requirements for channel drops and wiping out a slew of regulations deemed antiquated in this modern media age.

In remarks before the **Free State Foundation** Friday, Pai made it clear he wants part of his legacy to be reform of FCC operations. Some of those process changes have included publishing the text of open meeting agenda items three weeks before they are voted on. Before Pai's chairmanship, those items were only circulated among commissioners and their staff, with the text only available after the final vote.

"You shouldn't have to show up to the FCC or hire a lawyer and lobbyist with FCC connections to know what we're doing. Whether you're in DC or Des Moines, you should have equal insight into our work," Pai said during his virtual appearance before the think tank Friday.

No definitive word on who the next FCC chairman will be, but current Democratic commissioner *Jessica Rosenworcel* is viewed as the frontrunner. Whomever it is will have to decide whether to keep the practice or return to a process of stakeholders and press speculating on what is rumored to be in an item. "My two cent: good luck making the case for a return to secrecy," Pai said.

History will have to decide how close Pai was to President *Trump*, who nominated him as chairman in January 2017. During [an interview](#) with **C-SPAN's** "Communicators" this week, he offered criticism of Trump's handling of the Capitol mob. "I think it was a terrible mistake to suggest that the results of the election, in particular the process that culminated yesterday in the Senate and the House, could in any way be changed. That was a terrible mistake and one that I do not believe should have been indulged," he said. Asked about **Facebook** and **Twitter's** decision to suspend the president's social media accounts, Pai said "given the circumstances that we saw [Wednesday]... I'm not going to second-guess those decisions."

Pai did announce in October he would move forward on a rulemaking on Section 230, a section of law Trump and other Republicans have sought to revoke. Action on that seemed

## Mark Your Calendars!

### Cablefax Award Submission Deadlines:

#### The FAXIES Awards

Entry Deadline: March 19  
Final Deadline: March 26

#### Cablefax 100 Nominations

April 9

#### Top Ops Nominations

April 23

#### The Diversity List Nominations

July 16

#### Most Powerful Women Nominations

September 10

#### Program Awards

Entry Deadline: November 19  
Final Deadline: December 3



doomed once Joe Biden won the election, and Pai told the C-SPAN program he doesn't intend to move forward with a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, in part because there's not sufficient time to complete the administrative steps necessary to resolve the rulemaking. "There is now a bipartisan consensus among elected officials that the law should be changed... in terms of changing the law, that's a decision for lawmakers to consider, but I do think that there are certain bipartisan consensus areas forming regarding how it should be revised," he said.

Something that should have been part of Pai's legacy, but wasn't due to COVID-19 is the FCC's move to its new headquarters at 45 L Street NE in DC. Anyone who has visited the FCC HQ at The Portals on D Street—the FCC's home since 1999—is very familiar with the elaborate security procedures tethering visitors to certain areas. Security will still be important at the new building, but Pai said there are nooks and welcoming spaces for more collaboration.

For those used to the Commissioners being located on the 8th Floor, a space they've occupied since the agency was based on M St prior to the move to the Portals, prepare for disruption. "I know there's a lot of attachment to the 8th floor, but I believe it's the 10th floor at the moment," Pai told FSF's founder *Randolph May*.

#### QUIBI CONTENT LANDS ON ROKU

**Roku** made its biggest original programming move thus far, acquiring the exclusive global distribution rights to shuttered streamer **Quibi's** portfolio. Roku plans to make the content free on an ad-supported basis later this year for all Roku users. The programming includes scripted series, alternative

and reality programming with top stars like *Idris Elba*, *Liam Hemsworth*, *Anna Kendrick* and *Chrissy Teigen*. Additionally, more than a dozen new programs will debut on **The Roku Channel**. Roku stock hit an all-time high Friday, at one point reaching \$402.81. Stock closed at 399.13, up 5.23%.

#### LIGHTSHED UPGRADES DISNEY

**LightShed Partners** is upgrading **Disney** to "Neutral" from its May downgrade to "Sell." "Our call has been dead wrong. At the time we focused on how the market under-appreciated the impact of COVID-19 on fiscal (September) 2020-2021 earnings," the note reads. "While we cannot fix our mistake, we believe investors will find it valuable for us to analyze why our call went off the rails, particularly in the past couple of months." LightShed pointed to the fact that investors looked past COVID and focused on the post-pandemic world, particularly after vaccines became available. The analysts also said CEO *Bob Chapek* surprised them by leaning further into streaming. "Honestly, we felt Disney had given the CEO job to the wrong person. We believed that the more forward-thinking and digitally savvy *Kevin Mayer* was a better choice to create the vision for Disney's future and execute on that strategy," they wrote.

#### CHARTER INVESTS IN COMSCORE

**Comscore** announced investments from **Charter Communications**, **Qurate Retail** and an affiliate of **Cerberus Capital Management**. The companies will each make a cash investment in exchange for shares of convertible preferred stock. Proceeds will be used to retire Comscore's existing debt and "significantly improve" its financial flexibility and liquidity position. Comscore issued \$204mIn of preferred stock at

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## American Red Cross

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\$2.47/share, and each investor received \$27.5mln shares. Comscore also announced that **Comcast** will be extending its current data agreement with the company, and Charter will also provide a long-term data rights agreement.

**SPECTACOR RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**Comcast Spectacor**, the owner of the Wells Fargo Center arena and the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers, is advancing its commitment to renewable energy at two of its primary facilities. In partnership with **SunPower**, the company completed the installation of a 1.06 MW onsite solar system at the Voorhees, NJ, training facility, set to achieve 100% renewable electricity supply.

**AD TECH DEAL**

**TEGNA** and **FreeWheel** reached a multi-year deal that will extend their relationship for FreeWheel's Strata platform to process electronic orders through ePort, an automated platform that enables purchasing ads from local television stations. The deal also encompasses TEGNA's CTV/OTT advertising platform **Premion**, which uses FreeWheel's Strata platform to process electronic orders through ePort. The companies have also committed to continuing their joint innovation initiatives, with a specific focus on working on new marketplace-based technology to enhance programmatic transactions and inventory acquisition.

**ON THE (VIRTUAL) CIRCUIT**

**NATPE** will kick off its virtual Miami conference on Jan 19 with a keynote from **NBCUniversal** television and streaming chmn *Mark Lazarus*. He'll be joined on stage by *Hoda Kotb*, co-anchor of **NBC News** "Today." NATPE Virtual Miami takes palace Jan 19-22.

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**Up Ahead**

**JAN 11-14: VIRTUAL CES 2021**

**JAN 13: FCC OPEN COMMISSION MEETING**

**JAN 14: ROCKY MOUNTAIN CABLE ASSOCIATION EPIC VIRTUAL PARTY**

**JAN 19-21: VIRTUAL NATPE MIAMI**

**JAN 25-28: REALSCREEN SUMMIT 2021**

**Research**

- > There will be nearly 2bln active subscriptions to on-demand video services in 2025, a 65% increase over the end of 2020.
- > The primary engine for this growth will be from traditional broadcasters turning to streaming services in order to extend their reach.
- > In 2020, there was an average of four SVOD subscriptions per household in the US.
- > Over 70% of streamed video sessions in the next five years will occur on smartphones.

(Source: [Juniper Research](#))

**Quotable**

*"I look forward to working in the public interest with my colleagues Commissioners Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks, as well as the President-elect's new nominee. Our mandate at the Commission is to work for the benefit of all Americans. Should we disagree on some issues, we would do well to remember Thomas Jefferson's words at the time of another presidential transition, the first in which the Administration changed parties: '... every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle.'"*

— **FCC commissioner Nathan Simington's statement on the events at the Capitol and the peaceful transition of power**

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