

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Better Together: Pai Encourages Federal, State Broadband Partnerships

Huge amounts of funding for broadband are coming out of Washington, and former **FCC** chairman *Ajit Pai* believes there is plenty states can do now to ensure that money makes an impact.

During a keynote address at the **Pelican Institute's** Big Solutions Mini Summit, Pai (and his [Twitter-famous](#) companion Ginger the bulldog) urged states like Louisiana to consider using public funds to help connect those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

"For example, if the Louisiana broadband office uses any state funds that are available to essentially match the funding that will come from the FCC through Phase II of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, that would be a powerful combination to help connect unserved or underserved folks in the Pelican State," said Pai, who was frequently interrupted during the virtual conversation by Ginger's barking.

He also urged states and lawmakers to begin looking now at outdated rules that could be serving as roadblocks to innovation and broadband expansion. He pushed for dig-once policies that can ensure conduit can be laid cheaply when a road is being dug up for repairs, Quicker and cheaper access to utility poles owned by municipalities would be a huge factor to speeding up deployment and streamlining the process for wireless infrastructure like small cells. "These reforms may seem arcane, but they can be critical drivers for the construc-

tion of next-generation networks," Pai said.

States are about to receive billions of dollars in funding from the American Rescue Plan of 2021, and some of that will be earmarked for infrastructure, including broadband. When it comes to determining the best way to spend the money, Pai suggested that states should stay in close contact with the FCC and consult with the agency on which areas remain unserved based on the most up-to-date data.

"I would work as closely as you can with the FCC, with the mapping team in particular, to figure out exactly what parts of the state need to be addressed," Pai said. "I think it is important for Louisiana and the agency to work closely together to make sure that the dollars you're about to get are stretched as far as they possibly can be."

He's also particularly excited about the potential for satellite internet to enter the market on a larger scale and connect those areas where there may never be a business case for laying optical fiber. Connectivity has been critical in allowing people to continue working and learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and its importance won't fade once the world returns back to a semblance of normalcy. Pai sees trends like the telehealth boom sticking around for the long haul.

"I think it's going to be much more the norm than the exception in the future, and I think the pandemic has only underscored how critical it is to have connected care solutions," Pai said. "I think the future is very bright and both Democrats and Republicans get that."

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



Pai's still not sure what his first post-FCC gig will look like. He's been spending the last two months talking with various folks about his options. He joked those include potentially getting tapped as the replacement for Judge Judy.

"I'm very grateful to all the folks who have made time for me over the last couple of months to help me try to figure out the next phase of the adventure. I certainly feel like the Forrest Gump of the communications sector thus far, and whatever it is that comes next will involve something similarly exciting," Pai said.

DON'T YOU FORGET ABOUT RETRANS

With new leadership at the **FCC**, the **American TV Alliance** is making sure commissioners and staffers are aware of its retransmission consent concerns, particularly having just wrapped up a year with a record 342 blackouts. During a recent meeting that included representatives from **Charter, DISH, ACA Connects, AT&T, Verizon, NCTA, Frontier** and **ATVA**, there was talk about how current rules permit broadcasters to create local duopolies, triopolies, and even quadropolies despite the FCC's ban on top-four combinations. "By our count, we have found 91 incidents of duopolies, 11 triopolies, and 3 quadropolies, the vast majority of which were created through loopholes," ATVA said in an ex parte filing. The meeting also delved into broadcasters' argument that local consolidation can lead to more local news, with the pay TV crowd pushing back. "These assertions, however, seem contrary to our understanding of the marketplace—which is that the amount of truly local news and independent voices on different stations in the market has decreased," the filing said.

CURIOSITYSTREAM HITS 15 MILLION SUBS

CuriosityStream ended 2020 with approximately 15 million paying subscribers, while 4Q20 revenue climbed 70% YOY to \$11.4 million. The company, which had 10 million subs at the

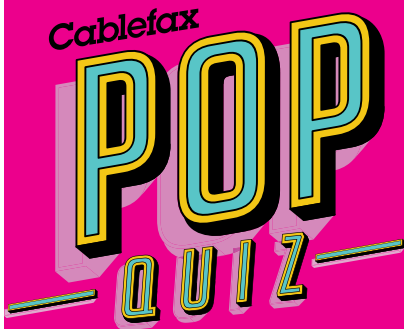
end of 4Q19, raised approximately \$100 million in a follow-on offering completed in February. The factual programmer is expecting revenue of at least \$71 million for 2021. CuriosityStream posted a 4Q net loss of \$15.7 million, up from a loss of \$14.6 million a year ago. EBITDA was \$15.5 million compared to \$14.8 million in 4Q19.

VIACOMCBS SINGS 5G PRAISES

In a 10-page white paper released Tuesday, **ViacomCBS Networks International** touted unleashing 5G's potential through entertainment—and specifically, its portfolio (natch). VCNI points to eight ways that 5G will change the entertainment landscape: live streaming anywhere, immersive media, responsive content, immersive marketing & brand collaboration, talent & fan engagement, marquee events, remote production and dedicated production bandwidth. The company said it's combining those elements with its portfolio to deliver new production techniques such as 360-degree volumetric cameras/bodycams and virtual audience experiences. In September, VCNI partnered with **IBC** to execute the industry's first 5G remote production use case with the MTV Push performance of Dutch musical artist *Emma Heesters* from a boat in Amsterdam. As part of a real-time, multi-location, multiplatform remote production, the broadcast used 5G network slicing, along with drones and, in a world first, AI controlled remote cameras, all transmitting video via the production cloud and back to Viacom's HQ in London.

FUSE MEDIA UPFRONTS

Fuse Media unveiled a new streaming division at its Tuesday upfront. It will launch with two free ad-supported streaming channels, Fuse Backstage and Fuse Sweat. Fuse Backstage launches Wednesday to approximately 100 million users via



What is the name of this now-defunct network that had the slogan "pop, culture, TV" and was home to the series "Brilliant But Cancelled"?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

Last week's answer: Ken Ober was the host of MTV's first game show "Remote Control."

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Samsung TV Plus, VIZIO SmartCast and more. It's a collection of music bios, performances, interviews, reality shows and other music-related content. Fuse Sweat, which launches later this month on Fuse owned-and-operated apps and SmartCast, pays homage to the 1980s fitness craze popularized by *Richard Simmons* and *Jane Fonda*. Additional brands will be added to Fuse's streaming portfolio later this year as well as new carriage deals. New programming for linear net Fuse includes "Sex Sells," which explores a different sex-related business each episode and "Like A Girl," which puts female athletes in the spotlight. In other upfront news, Fuse is expanding its branded content business via a partnership with Sofar Sounds to create content around Sofar's virtual events. It's also linked up with beauty subscription service IPSY to create digital and social content tied to Fuse's brand new original series, "Shine True."

DISNEY SHIFTS MORE FILMS TO STREAMING

Disney is bringing more of its upcoming slate to Disney+. Live-action films "Cruella" and "Black Widow" will launch simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+ with Premier Access in most of the streamer's markets on May 28 and July 9, respectively. Animated film "Luca" will skip the theaters entirely and will become available to all Disney+ subscribers on June 18.

ROKU STANDS UP AD STUDIO

Roku unveiled its own advertising brand studio ahead of the upfronts season. The studio will aim to create new creative ad formats and programming tailored for marketers. The announcement teases capabilities like advertiser-commissioned short-form TV programs, interactive video ads and other branded content on The Roku Channel. The company will reveal more details and partners at its IAB NewFronts presentation on May 3. The news comes days after Roku acquired the global distribution rights to "This Old House." Current and past seasons of the series and "Ask This Old House" are available for free on The Roku Channel.

DISTRIBUTION

Comcast is adding **MLB.TV** to its Flex service for internet-only customers. Existing subscribers to the out-of-market game package can say "MLB app" into their Xfinity voice remote to launch the app, while new customers can sign up for any one of MLB.TV's three packages at www.mlb.com/flex so that they can take advantage of the Flex integration in time for Opening Day on April 1.

NAB SHOW ACCEPTING PROPOSALS

NAB is still planning to hold its **NAB Show** in-person in Vegas Oct 9-13, and it has put out the call for proposals for technical papers to be presented at the 75th Annual Broadcast Engineering and IT Conference. It's seeking submissions on a host of topics facing media professionals, from the incorporation of AI to emerging trends shaping the future of content creation. The deadline for speaking proposals is April 30.

HOW'S YOUR BRACKET?

The 2021 NCAA Men's Tournament has featured multiple upsets in the first two rounds, so **ESPN** is opening a Tournament Challenge Second Chance game. Any bracket-makers can edit their picks until Saturday at 2:40pm ET for a second

chance at predicting the winners for the remaining 15 games and to win a \$5,000 Amazon Gift Card. The ESPN Women's Tournament Challenge grew 103% YOY, and only two perfect 32-0 brackets remained after last night's first round.

PROGRAMMING

VH1's "Wild 'N Out" is back with new episodes April 6 at 8pm. – **Lifetime** special "Women Making History" will premiere March 30 at 8pm. The one-hour special features an exclusive interview with VP *Kamala Harris* and showcases influential women across professions. – **Bravo's** "The Real Housewives of New York City" returns for its 13th season May 4 at 9pm. – **HBO** will premiere the six-episode first part to Season One of "THE NEVERS" April 11 at 9pm ET. Part Two, also six episodes, will premiere at a later date to be announced. The series will be available to stream on HBO Max. – **FX** renewed "Snowfall" for a fifth season. Season 4 currently airs at 10pm ET every Wednesday and is available the following day on FX on **Hulu**. – "My Little Pony: Pony Life" Season 2 premieres April 10 at 11:30am ET on **Discovery Family**. The series will also stream live and on demand on Discovery Family Go. – **HLN** will provide live, gavel-to-gavel coverage and analysis of Minnesota v. *Derek Chauvin* starting Monday at 10am ET. "The Death of George Floyd – Derek Chauvin on Trial" will air each day court is in session from 10am ET to approximately 6pm ET. – Six-part series "Spy City" premieres April 15 exclusively on **AMC+**, along with the season finale of "Cold Courage." The streamer will also provide early access to the second half of "Fear the Walking Dead" Season 6 on April 4 ahead of the AMC debut April 11 at 9pm ET. AMC+ will also provide live streams of **BBC America's** 2021 BAFTA Awards on April 11 and **IFC's** Independent Spirit Awards on April 22. – "Duff's Happy Fun Bake Time" will premiere exclusively on **discovery+** April 29 starring *Duff Goldman* and puppet characters from the Jim Henson Company.

PEOPLE

Megan Detz will join **Cable One** as svp, human resources. She is expected to begin the role during 2Q21 following the closure of Cable One's acquisition of **Hargray Communications**. Detz is currently svp, human resources & administration at Hargray. – *Brenda Laboy* will be the new vp, network engineering and construction for **Comcast's** 'Big South' region. Laboy comes from **AT&T**, where she most recently served as assistant vp, wireless and wireline construction and engineering in L.A. – *Danielle Thumann* joined the **FCC** as legal adviser to commish *Brendan Carr*, while former legal advisor *Ben Arden* was promoted to Carr's chief of staff. Thumann most recently worked at Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP – *Evan Swartztrauber* has become director, tech and telecom policy and communications at Clout Public Affairs, a division of **Axiom Strategies**. Swartztrauber most recently served as FCC policy advisor to *Ajit Pai*.

FAXIES REMINDER

Friday is the final deadline to enter **Cablefax's** annual FAXIES Awards. We're looking for a Corporate Citizenship Hero, Best New Product, Marketing Executive of the Year and more. Enter today at www.TheFAXIES.com.

D&I VIEWPOINTS

A Look at Diversity, Equity & Inclusion from Inside the Industry



Know Better, Do Better



Melissa Ingram
UP Entertainment
& AspireTV
Guest Columnist

As a Black woman, I can earnestly say that I never imagined that it would take a recording of the senseless, untimely, and unjustified death of a Black man, to awaken us as a nation and as an industry. Only because there had been so many before, but it did.

George Floyd's death has been the catalyst to global support and the universal acknowledgement that Black lives indeed matter. Diversity, Inclusion and Equity are more than just buzz words now, but rather demands, verbs requiring us to act and not simply be.

Act, and not simply exist.

We have existed in an industry that flourishes on the cultural contributions and viewing behaviors of Black people, yet we have failed to see them, represent them, and value them as well as other people of color.

Over the past decade we have witnessed the outcry of social media movements like #oscarssowhite and strides have been made to promote women and people of color, but let us be real. The burden has been on executives, networks, and talent of color to engage, hire, develop, and value other creatives of color. For nearly 25 years, the American Black Film Festival (ABFF) has done that which Hollywood would not do – recognize Black talent and stories as excellent.

Shift the burden.

The truth is that the burden should not be on executives, writers, producers, directors nor talent of color to value their own. The burden must shift, so that there is equity throughout the

entire eco-system, in front of and behind the camera, in leadership and ownership, from content creation to distribution. And while we celebrate the successes of our own like Issa Rae, Regina Hall, Shonda Rhimes, Ryan Coogler and Barry Jenkins, there is room at the table for many more creatives of color to use their gifts and talents in the industry. If inclusion, equity and belonging are what we truly seek in this industry, then action must occur to undo the generations of inequities and isolation.

Undo generations of inequities.

By now, I'm certain you have heard of the McKinsey & Company report on [Black representation in Film and TV: The challenges and impact of increasing diversity](#). If not, I encourage you to read it. Here is the headline – the industry is leaving \$10 billion, not million, but \$10 billion in annual revenue on the table by failing to address its constant racial inequities.

So, there it is, not only is it the human thing to do to address the racial inequities within our industry, but it makes good business sense too. This is something we have always known, and the data has been there to support the change we seek. We now have a valuation of \$10 billion on the change we seek. The McKinsey report also offers concrete action steps for change for an equitable future that involves engagement, accountability, funding, and creation.

Do good and it pays off.

I live by the words of the great Maya Angelou that “when you know better, you do better”. I hope our industry can take heed to these words as well. We know better and now we must do better to finally create a diverse, equitable, inclusive industry **where we all belong.**

- Melissa Ingram is SVP, Multicultural Networks and Strategy for UP Entertainment and General Manager of AspireTV.