

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Ballot Backlash: Corporations Face Scrutiny Over New Voting Laws

With **MLB** pulling its All-Star Game out of Atlanta following the state's enactment of a new voting law, corporations are under scrutiny for their support of lawmakers in such states. Critics blast the bill as an attempt at voter suppression, while supporters say it will help ward off voter fraud.

A [report](#) released Monday by the nonprofit organization **Public Citizen** found corporations have contributed \$50 million since 2015 to state legislators supporting voter suppression bills, including \$22 million during the 2020 election cycle. More than 60 corporations have contributed more than \$100,000 since 2015, with **AT&T** giving the most at \$811,000. **Comcast** took third place at \$440,000. Also making the list: **Verizon** (\$246,000) and **Charter** (\$203,000).

Of course, these corporations are also some of the biggest political donors. Companies are pretty quick to note that they don't always agree with every position taken by candidates they donate to, but January's decision by several corporations to halt donations to lawmakers who objected to Electoral College results has opened up the discussion.

"After the January 6 insurrection many corporations announced they were pausing their campaign donations in some capacity. Public Citizen noted at the time that any measures short of lifetime bans on donations to federal level disenfranchisers likely amounted to nothing more than PR stunts. The same logic applies to any corporation condemning these voter

suppression bills at the state level, as some have already done in Georgia and Arizona," Public Citizen said. "Disavowing these bills now will amount to a meaningless gesture if corporations continue to bankroll the bills' supporters with future campaign contributions."

Comcast yanked money to Republicans who refused to certify the presidential election in January, with a spokesperson confirming that policy still stands. The company declined to respond directly to the Public Citizen report, but has spoken out against voter suppression. "Voting is fundamental to our democracy. We believe that all Americans should enjoy equitable access to secure elections and we have long supported and promoted voter education, registration and participation campaigns across the country to achieve that goal. Efforts to limit or impede access to this vital constitutional right for any citizen are not consistent with our values," said a company statement.

AT&T, Verizon and Charter did not return requests for comment. Meanwhile, the unions representing writers and screen actors are expressing concern over Georgia's new law—significant given the number of movies and TV shows filmed in the state. "**SAG-AFTRA** opposes any effort to suppress the constitutional rights of Americans, including our members..." the heads of the Guild said Monday. "The more voices and perspectives we see at the ballot box, the stronger our democracy and our people will be. We encourage SAG-AFTRA members everywhere to make themselves heard, stand up against in-



## Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax: The Magazine.

**It's free to enter - but you must submit your entries by April 9!**



Enter at [www.Cablefax100.com](http://www.Cablefax100.com) | Questions: Mary-Lou French at [mfrench@accessintel.com](mailto:mfrench@accessintel.com)

justices, and support laws designed to level the playing field.”

**The Writers Guild of America** issued a lengthier statement Friday, complaining that Georgia took a “giant leap backwards” in the struggle to “overcome the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and structural racism.” “The WGA and its members do not decide whether film and TV projects are produced in Georgia. But we do have members who live and work in the state – many of whom are BIPOC and who are deeply troubled by the new law and the damage it does to them and to their state. Together we stand in opposition to all efforts to suppress the vote, including this regressive new law. If Georgia wants to benefit from the thousands of good jobs our industry brings to the state, it cannot attack the democratic rights of its own people,” WGA said.

More than 70 Black executives, including former **Time Warner** CEO *Dick Parsons* and ex-**BET** CEO *Debra Lee*, signed a [letter](#) last week calling on corporate America to use its collective influence to ensure fairness for all. “Corporate America should publicly oppose any discriminatory legislation and all measures designed to limit Americans’ ability to vote. When it comes to protecting the rights of all Americans to vote, there can be no middle ground,” they wrote.

#### WOW! REVEALS DATA CAP PLANS

**WOW!** has plans to introduce a monthly data cap in the Chicago market come June 1. *Ars Technica* was the first to spot the news, which came in an April 1 email to customers. **WOW!** said in the pizza-themed message that the average customer will consume far less data than their plans and only a small percentage will ever be impacted by overage fees.

“This small percentage includes behaviors like using servers or file-sharing applications that consume extreme amounts of data,” the company said. “A monthly data plan ensures that every **WOW!** customer has a consistent Internet experience. To put it in pizza terms: it’s so everyone gets the amount they ordered (or the amount to satisfy their hunger).” Data caps will vary plan to plan. If a customer should exceed their data allowance, **WOW!** will automatically apply increments of 50GB for \$10 to their account for the remainder of the calendar month, and overage charges will not exceed \$50 per billing statement. The company will waive those fees the first time a customer experiences an overage. Any usage of **WOW!** tv+ won’t be counted towards data usage plans. **WOW!** told **CFX** that an unlimited data plan can be added to the company’s 1 Gig plan for an additional \$30/month, but it does not seem that customers subscribing to other plans will have the option. “**WOW!** does not impose restrictions on data usage,” a **WOW!** spokesperson said in a statement. “This is ultimately an initiative to level the playing field for data usage and will not affect the **WOW!** experience in which the company prides itself.” Others have caught fire for trying to implement a data cap during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Comcast** announced plans to implement a data cap in its Northeast markets back in November, but delayed the move to 2022 after receiving pushback from state officials across the region.

#### LAWMAKERS DISCOURAGE INSTAGRAM FOR KIDS

Sens *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) along with Reps *Kathy Castor* (D-FL) and *Lori Trahan* (D-MA) sent a letter to **Facebook** CEO *Mark Zuckerberg* with questions

# 2021 CYNOPSIS RESOURCE CENTER

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regarding the company's recent exploration into developing a version of Instagram for children. They expressed a high level of concern over the possibility, citing Facebook's past failures to adequately protect children on the social network's Messenger Kids app. The lawmakers asked Zuckerberg to make a series of commitments about how any future version of Instagram for children would operate, including that it would always be completely free of targeted advertising.

### VIACOMCBS BUYS CHILEVISIÓN

**ViacomCBS Networks International** struck a deal Monday to acquire **Chilevisión** from **WarnerMedia**. The acquisition includes Chilevisión's free-to-air television network, its substantial library of content and production capabilities. Chilevisión will fall under the leadership of *Juan Acosta*, pres of ViacomCBS International Studios and Networks Americas. The transaction will be financed by ViacomCBS's existing cash balances.

### PODCAST ALERT

**C-SPAN** launches podcast "Booknotes+" Tuesday, which builds on *Brian Lamb's* long-running "Booknotes TV" program which ran from 1989-2004. It's a mix of new interviews along with dives into the archives, presented in a shorter, more digestible format. – No fooling—April 1 marked the 30-year anniversary of the launch of **Comedy Central**. It was formed by merging **HBO's** Comedy Channel and **MTV's** Ha! into one network. Last year, former media exec *Art Bell* penned the memoir, "Constant Comedy: How I Started Comedy Central and Lost My Sense of Humor." Now he's teaming up with one of Comedy Central's first employees and former **CBS** svp, talent development *Vinnie Favale* to launch the weekly "Constant Comedy" podcast where they'll talk about the network's beginnings and comedy today. Ep 1 features producer *Laurie Zaks*.

### DOING GOOD

**OWN** announced the OWN Your Health initiative, a campaign to promote health literacy for Black women. The initiative focuses on three key pillars affecting Black women's health: proactive prevention (routine screenings, nutrition, physical activity, health education and accountability), the unspoken (fertility, motherhood, sexual and relationship health, trauma, financial health and treatment options) and superwoman (the obligation to project an image of strength and suppress emotions, to resist accepting help or admitting vulnerability and prioritizing caregiving to others and community to the detriment of self). OWN Your Health expands on the success of OWN's 2020 get-out-the-vote initiative, OWN Your Vote, which was honored in **Cablefax's** 2020 Most Powerful Women magazine.

### DISTRIBUTION

**TEGNA** announced the debut of **Twist**, a multicast channel featuring lifestyle and reality programming. Twist carriage includes 41 TEGNA markets and 11 **Univision** local television markets, including the top four markets of NY, LA, Chicago and Philadelphia, 31 HC2 Broadcasting markets and WISH Indianapolis,

WADL Detroit and WIWN Milwaukee. – **Allen Media Group's** broadcast network **This TV** is expanding its distribution to eight **ABC**-owned TV station subchannels. Those stations are NY, LA, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Houston, Fresno and Raleigh-Durham, and they represent approximately 27 million television households.

### PROGRAMMING

*Guy Fieri* signed a multi-year exclusive deal with **Food Network**. The agreement spans three years and will bring more episodes of Fieri favorites "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives," Guy's Grocery Games" and "Tournament of Champions" to both Food Network and **discovery+** along with new projects. – **NBC Sports** and **Peacock** will be providing more than 165 hours of coverage of the 2021 NTT INDYCAR Series season across **NBC**, NBCSN Peacock and NBC Sports digital platforms. Nine races will broadcast on NBC beginning with the season opener Honda Grand Prix of Alabama on April 18 at 3pm ET. Peacock will feature exclusive coverage including race-day warmups and full-event replays of 2021 INDYCAR races. – **HBO** launched a month-long event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the "Game of Thrones" series premiere. Beginning Monday, **HBO Max** will feature a GOT Spotlight Page, an in-app experience with cast interviews, clips, trailers and behind-the-scenes extras. Beginning Saturday, HBO will launch a Game of Thrones "MaraThrone" with all episodes of Season 1 airing on **HBO2** starting at 10am ET, all the way through the series over two weeks. – The eleventh and final season of "The Walking Dead" premieres August 22, kicking off with eight new episodes. The expanded last season will have 24 episodes. – **HBO Max** won't lose a slate of classic cartoons at the end of the month after all. Warner Brothers announced extended availability of several Hanna-Barbera and Looney Tunes titles, including "The Flintstones," "The Scooby-Doo Show" and "Looney Tunes." – Season 14 of "Heartland" will premiere May 6 on streamer **UP Faith & Family**. New episodes will drop weekly and fans can view all prior seasons on the streaming service now.

### PEOPLE

*Tom Johnson*, former **FCC** general counsel under **Ajit Pai**, joined law firm **Wiley** as partner and will serve as co-chair of its Appellate Practice. His victories at the FCC include persuading the US Supreme Court to review its media ownership reforms, resulting in last week's unanimous decision to reinstate the changes. He also successfully defended the FCC's repeal of Title II for ISPs before the DC Circuit. – *Karen Milne* has joined **Wilkinson Barker Knauer** as a partner in the firm's DC office. Milne most recently worked in the communications and IT section of an AmLaw 100 firm and has experience representing clients before the **FCC** on regulatory and transactional issues. – *Lauren Kisilevsky* was promoted to svp, original movies for **Disney Branded Television**. Kisilevsky joined **Disney Channel** in 2010 and previously held roles at **Beacon Pictures** and **Blue Star Pictures**. – **Spectrum** named *Alexander Quince* as senior director, news for Spectrum News in Upstate New York. He most recently served as executive producer for WABC-TV in NYC.