

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Security Risk: Industry Offers FCC Rip and Replace Recommendations

Cable operators and industry associations alike offered their support this week to a new reimbursement prioritization schedule for the FCC's rip and replace program. The program, which would see providers remove equipment from manufacturers like **Huawei** and **ZTE** that pose a national security risk and be reimbursed for their replacements, was granted \$1.9 billion by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

While the Commission has proposed increasing the range of service providers that are eligible from those with under 2 million subscribers to those that count under 10 million, many filers said those smaller operators need to be first in line for reimbursement. Beyond that, the funds they receive should equal the full amount needed to remove any and all covered equipment to ensure they're not harmed more than they're helped.

"After all, if any covered equipment remains in the ETC's network, the provider will be forced to either find a way to finance the cost of replacing any covered equipment or services not reimbursed or risk losing eligibility for universal service funds, an outcome that ultimately hurts the communities served by these small providers," **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** said. "Smaller providers already operate on razor thin margins; adding the financial cost of replacing existing equipment outside of its normal upgrade cycle or losing universal service funding would be a crushing burden."

The revamped schedule would also eliminate a previous

prioritization that favored non-ETCs that had responded to the Commission's cost estimate data collection, something that **Mediacom** called out as "arbitrary and unfair" in its filing at the Commission.

"At the time of the collection, many providers, like Mediacom, were focused on meeting the skyrocketing demand for network resources and ensuring their customers remained connected during the pandemic, all while working with limited staffing," the company said. "Although Mediacom appreciates that the Commission granted a 30-day extension of the filing deadline for the data collection, for many smaller providers, that was still not enough—they simply did not have the resources necessary to evaluate their entire network and respond to what they believed was a voluntary data collection while still meeting consumer demands."

One smaller operator is looking to switch things up, giving open access radio networks a thorough examination as it looks for replacement technologies. **Triangle Communications**, a provider serving central Montana, said it is currently investigating and is interested in acquiring ORAN equipment. "Triangle's research has found ORAN equipment to be competitively priced and fully functional compared to legacy vendors' equipment options which lock you into always using their equipment," the company said in its filing.

5G AVAILABILITY

Verizon's 5G Business Internet is expanding to an additional 21 US cities by the end of the month. The service arrived Thursday

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in parts of cities including Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Miami and San Francisco with parts of Riverside-Corona, California, becoming available on April 22. Offerings include 100, 200 and 400Mbps plans for SMB and enterprise customers with no data limits. The company is offering a 10-year price lock for new customers. – **Xfinity Mobile** introduced 5G unlimited data options Thursday. Prices will start at \$45 for one line. Later this month, the service is launching a promotion that will allow new and existing customers to receive a free Motorola one 5G ace phone when they add a line. “We suspect that the new pricing is a byproduct of the recently renegotiated MVNO with Verizon, with which Comcast expects to acquire more subscribers more profitably,” **New Street Research** said in a note. “**Charter** also stands to benefit from the more favorable MVNO terms, and we suspect they may follow Comcast’s new pricing strategy in short order.”

DISTRIBUTION

Hallmark Movies & More, a free, ad-supported streaming channel from **Crown Media Family Networks**, launched on **VIZIO SmartCast** Thursday. The channel features more than 100 titles from Crown Media’s archive of original content. – **discovery+** is now available on **Amazon Prime Video Channels** in the US. The ad-free version is available for \$6.99 per month and the ad-supported version will be available on Prime Video Channels in the coming months. – OTT service provider **Frndly TV** reached a carriage agreement with noncommercial network **BYUtv**. Frndly TV bills itself as a family friendly streaming service, carrying channels such as **Hallmark Channel**, **INSP** and **Game Show Network**. Plans start at \$5.99/month.

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau** will begin accepting applications for Round 2 of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program on April 29 at 12pm ET. Nearly \$250 million in federal funds have been set aside for the second round of the program, which will support healthcare providers continuing to serve patients during the pandemic by reimbursing the costs of telecommunications services, information services and connected devices needed to enable telehealth during the pandemic. The filing window will close on May 6 at 12pm ET. – The FCC will re-establish the Communications Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council with a primary focus on improving 5G network security. The committee will also be tasked with reviewing software and cloud services vulnerabilities and developing mitigation strategies to prevent future security breaches.

SENATE TO CONSIDER FTC NOMINATION

Senate Commerce will hold a hearing Wednesday at 10am to consider the nomination of **Lisa Khan** to serve as a commissioner at the **FTC**. Also on the agenda is **Bill Nelson’s** nomination to be the administrator of the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**.

INDEMAND EXCLUSIVE HOME FOR SKREN-PAUL

Can **iNDemand** do it again? Last November’s **Mike Tyson vs Roy Jones Jr** PPV fight wend down as one of the Top 8 PPV events of all time, with more than 1.6 million pay-per-view buys according to Tyson’s Legends Only League. iNDemand’s hoping for a repeat, teaming once again with **Triller Fight Club** for Saturday’s boxing even with social media star **Jake Paul** and former MMA champ **Ben Askren** in Atlanta. iNDemand is serving as the exclusive US

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and Canadian cable, satellite, and telco PPV provider. Fans will be able to order the show for \$49.99 through their existing cable, satellite and telco PPV providers, including **Comcast, Charter, Cox, DirecTV & U-Verse, DISH, Verizon,** and **Optimum**, as well as **Shaw, Bell, Rogers,** and **SaskTel** in Canada. It's a bit of a boxing, live music mash-up, with seven fights along with musical performances by *Justin Bieber, The Black Keys, Doja Cat, Saweetie, Diplo, Major Lazer* and *Mt. Westmore*. *Pete Davidson* and *Mario Lopez* will serve as announcers at the event.

UPFRONT WITH TV ONE AND CLEO TV

TV One announced at its virtual upfront presentation Thursday that viewers can look forward to three new series, one annual awards show and a new movie on the network in the next year. "Despite the unexpected challenges of 2020, TV One and our production partners successfully navigated new production protocols while expanding our library of content," said *Robyn Greene-Arrington*, vp of programming and production. "We are excited to deliver fresh, impactful and entertaining programming that continues telling authentic stories through the lens of Black culture." Highlights include town hall series "Represent Our Voice," award ceremony "Urban One Honors" and the third movie in the network's "Coins" trilogy, "Coins Forever." **CLEO TV** drummed up anticipation with three new series and four returning favorites. Influencers can be seen living their best lives in "The CLEO Chronicles" while CLEO's global kitchen expands with culinary shows "Culture Kitchen" and "A Taste of the Diaspora." Returning series include "Living by Design," and "CLEO Speaks."

CBS SCORES CONCACAF, ESPN MLS-READY

CBS Sports and **Paramount +** will have the exclusive multiplatform English-language rights to Concacaf national team properties. This includes Concacaf Qualifiers for FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, Concacaf Men's Nations League and Concacaf Women's Nations League. Paramount+ will provide more than 200 Concacaf national team matches live. Select matches will air on CBS Sports linear platforms and coverage begins in June with the Concacaf Men's Nations League Finals. CBS Sports will continue coverage with the 2022-2023 Concacaf Men's Nations League and the inaugural Women's Nations League beginning in 2023. CBS Sports digital will deliver additional coverage, highlights and original programming across social channels and CBS Sports HQ. – **ESPN's** Major League Soccer coverage begins Friday at 7pm ET with the 2021 MLS Preview Show exclusively on **ESPN+**. ESPN networks will feature more than 380 MLS regular season matches across ABC, ESPN and ESPN+, including a combined 32 matches across **ABC**, ESPN and **ESPN2**. **ESPN Deportes** will carry Spanish-language telecasts of all 32 matches. Beyond live matches, SportsCenter and other ESPN studio shows will feature MLS highlights, interviews, analysis, features and more.

ANTHEM BUYS WOMEN'S MMA PROMOTION

AXS TV and **IMPACT Wrestling** owner **Anthem Entertainment** acquired all-women mixed martial arts promotion *Invicta Fighting Championships*. *Shannon Knapp*, who founded *Invicta* who in 2012, will join Anthem's executive team as a senior member of the sports media group. *Invicta FC* events will be

broadcast live on the Anthem-owned AXS TV and Fight Network, with the first event, *Invicta 44*, slated for May 21.

CABLELABS FORMS CONVERGENCE COMMITTEES

CableLabs has created **The Convergence Council**, an advisory board for multiple aspects of connectivity under the guidance of Cablelabs' chief research and development officer *Mariam Sorond*. Inaugural year members include *Facebook* vp, telco strategy *Dan Rabinovitsj*; *Caroline Chan*, **Intel** vp and gm, network business incubator division; and **Cisco** CTO, Broadband Technologies *John Chapman*. Sorond also put together the Mobile Convergence Committee, which is tasked with developing industry requirements for a network that will bolster the convergence architecture and its specifications. MCC is expected to grow to 14 members in the coming months. It currently is comprised of *Craig Cowden* (**Charter**); *Tom Nagel* (**Comcast**); *Tony Krueck* (**Cox**); *Iyad Tarazi* (**Federated Wireless**); *Xavier Rocoplan* (**Millicom**); *Luciano Ramos* (**Rogers**); *Brian O'Shaughnessy* (**Shaw**); *Elmar Grasser* (**Sunrise/Liberty Global**); *Nadia Benabdallah* (**Vodafone**); and *Eben Albertyn* (**VodafoneZiggo**).

TELEMUNDO FOCUSES ON FINANCIAL LITERACY

Telemundo will celebrate Financial Literacy Month by kicking off "Nuestras Finanzas," a national program designed to encourage and foster financial literacy in US Hispanics. Elements include a 10-week series focused on boosting financial help and a partnership with Chase Bank to donate laptops to young people. The program will also offer multiplatform integrations featuring virtual talks, national phone banks, on-air and digital segments and town hall-style webinars with subject matter experts and social media campaigns.

PROGRAMMING

MTV will air the Season 4 premiere of "Siesta Key" May 12 at 8pm. – "Meerkat Manor: Rise of the Dynasty" will premiere on **BBC America** June 5 at 8pm ET. **AMC+** will debut the series May 29. The series premiere is part of **BBC America's** spring nature programming, also highlighted by natural history series "One Wild Day," premiering Saturday at 8pm as well as "Attenborough's Journey" May 8 at 8pm ET.

PEOPLE

CBS is combining CBS News and the CBS Television Stations into one division, with **Hearst** newspapers, cable networks & digital media executive *Neeraj Khemlani* and former **ABC** Owned Television Stations Group president *Wendy McMahon* serving as presidents and co-heads. The division will bring under one management structure the broadcast resources of CBS News, the 24/7 streaming news service CBSN, 10 CBSN Local platforms, cbsnews.com and 28 CBS-owned stations in 17 major US markets. – *Lindsey Kasabian* was named svp, casting for **Freeform**. Her track record includes serving as principal casting for **Showtime's** "Homeland" and **FX's** "Pose." – *Craig Pilgjan* signed a new long-term agreement with **Lionsgate**, expanding his responsibilities and reach to become president of Lionsgate's unscripted television. He will retain his role as CEO of **Pilgrim Media Group**, adding the role of chair of Pilgrim Media Group.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'Cruel Summer' Brings the Heat

Freeform's newest series "Cruel Summer" takes us back to the 1990s. A time of flannel shirts, choker necklaces and no social media. That lack of internet may not be such a good thing for the teens at the heart of this thriller. "The media plays a very large role in our show. I think we looked at women like *Monica Lewinsky*, like *Lorena Bobbitt*—women who there was no Twitter, there was no Instagram, no TikTok for them to take to their own platform and grab the mic and say, 'Hey, this is what I want to say,'" showrunner *Tia Napolitano* told **CFX**. Cruel Summer unfolds over a triple timeline that covers 1993, 1994 and 1995, following two girls—one who goes missing and another who is accused of being connected to her disappearance. We won't say much more because Cruel Summer's twists are what make it a fun watch, particularly as you try to piece together the gaps (ahem, canyons) separating the years. *Jessica Biel* and *Michelle Purple* also serve as executive producers. "I was very, very excited to work with Jessica Biel and Michelle Purple. From the minute that I sat down in an interview with Michelle, I think we both had this feeling of, 'Oh, we're going to be friends for life,'" Napolitano said. "Just to work with this female Dream Team, and then tell stories for young women, about the time you're 14, 15, 16, 17. I think, especially in the '90s, you feel like you didn't really have a voice. Or how loud could my voice be? I get to be a big, old mouthpiece for these young women in our ensemble cast in a way that really got me super excited just to speak for them and get in their minds, and let's get things from a female perspective at that age that is so precious." Freeform debuts the first two episodes of Cruel Summer back-to-back, at 9pm on April 20. – *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

"Godfather of Harlem," Season 2 premiere, 9pm ET, **Epix**. There's nothing like a good, old-fashioned (it's 1964, after all) car chase to get the blood flowing. That's how the sophomore season of this Epix hit series begins—with an attempted hit, against heroin dealer and Bumpy Johnson (an outstanding *Forest Whitaker*). For those concerned about period pieces, not to worry. At least it's not total period. Music behind the car chase is solidly modern, and, parents of young children note, loaded with blue language. After that, with viewers' blood flowing, the blood really begins to flow. Bumpy realizes his future depends on gaining a solid overseas supplier (heard of 'the French Connection'?) of 'product.' And when Bumpy wants something, it's probably not a great idea to deny him. A Frenchman puts this assumption to the test in the episode's second scene. Next, we get insight on the story of *Malcolm X*, a Bumpy confidant, as he tries to return to the Nation of Islam. The elephant in the room, of course, is whether viewers interested in Johnson's storyline also want to learn about Malcolm X. On the other hand, the series, a mash-up of crime and Civil Rights, is so well-done. And it's not fiction. Johnson and Malcolm were friends for decades before they intersected in NY in 1964. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(04/05/21-04/11/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.690	2,124
MSNBC	0.535	1,646
HGTV	0.393	1,211
CNN	0.325	1,002
TBSC	0.306	943
HALL	0.284	873
ESPN	0.269	829
HIST	0.264	814
FOOD	0.250	769
DISC	0.236	726
TLC	0.230	707
INSP	0.226	696
USA	0.220	676
TNT	0.192	590
ID	0.189	581
TVLAND	0.183	565
LIFE	0.182	560
A&E	0.179	552
HMM	0.169	521
BRAVO	0.138	426
FX	0.137	422
AMC	0.133	410
ADSM	0.133	410
NATGEO	0.123	378
GSN	0.121	373
SYFY	0.119	366
WETV	0.117	361
NAN	0.114	350
APL	0.112	346
COM	0.111	342
MTV	0.110	339
TRAVEL	0.098	302
NICK	0.096	295
FRFM	0.091	281

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.



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