

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Old Dog, New Tricks: What Lifeline Could Learn from the EBB

The Emergency Broadband Benefit program isn't a substitute for Lifeline, but some across the industry think there are plenty of aspects of the new program that should stick around for the long-term.

**Verizon** said in comments to the **FCC** that the potential learnings are so important that the Wireline Competition Bureau should recommend in its upcoming report on the state of the lifeline marketplace that the FCC maintain current Lifeline rules, including minimum service standards and discounts on standalone video services, until at least the EBB has concluded. Such a move would give participating companies breathing room to adjust to the start of the new rules and allow for some flexibility should Congress pass legislation to extend the EBB.

"Because the EBB Program is expected to launch at the end of April, the EBB program could conclude at about the same time as the scheduled December 1, 2021 changes to the Lifeline program," Verizon said. "Given that tens of millions of households are eligible for both the EBB Program and the Lifeline program, and that many providers will be participating in both, the transition from the EBB Program will be far more complicated if the Lifeline program is changing at the same time that the EBB Program is ending."

**USTelecom** agreed on the need for a delay, suggesting that the Commission push off the phase out of standalone

voice support until Dec 1, 2022, to allow more time to gather data on the connectivity needs of low-income individuals and families. **The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society** recommended the report on the state of Lifeline should include an assessment of how much low-income households have the ability to pay each month for connectivity services.

"According to recent studies, job losses from the pandemic have disproportionately affected low-wage workers and communities of color. Studies also show that the less workers earned, the more likely they have been to lose their jobs," Benton said in its comments. "These households are facing dire financial prospects and are often finding themselves in circumstances where they have to choose whether to pay for broadband or another essential service instead."

When the time does come, **NCTA** has some ideas on how the Lifeline program could be modernized to run more like the EBB. It believes Lifeline could better serve consumers with a more streamlined structure that eliminates regulations like the Eligible Telecommunications Carrier requirement, significant since many cable operators don't have ETC designations. NCTA also said the FCC should consider updating Lifeline with reduced reporting requirements combined with protections to guard against waste, fraud and abuse.

"The significant interest in the EBB program is in large part due to efforts by Congress and the Commission to structure a program that lacks the burdens and complexity of the Lifeline rules, which were designed for legacy telephone providers

## KATZ MEDIA LIVE WEBINAR:

Extend Your Audience Reach +  
Unlock Growth in a Platform World

THURSDAY, APRIL 29 AT 1:00 PM ET

REGISTER NOW  
(IT'S FREE!)

PRESENTED BY:  
**CYNOPSIS  
MEDIA**

**KATZ LIVE**

and not for providers of high-speed broadband,” NCTA said.

In its comments, **Public Knowledge** urged the Bureau to recommend that the FCC reverse its decision to increase the minimum service standards for mobile broadband. The 2016 Lifeline Order included phased-in increased mobile service standards for mobile broadband over multiple years. Under the order, mobile broadband data capacity was set to increase from 3GB/month to 11.75GB/month, effective Dec 1 of last year. A revised methodology from then-FCC chairman *Ajit Pai* led to a more gradual increase to 4.5GB/month. Though a far smaller increase, Public Knowledge said it will still make Lifeline prohibitively expensive for many low-income customers.

“By raising the minimum standards for Lifeline without an increase in the Lifeline subsidy, the Commission makes it practically impossible for providers to continue offering the few no-cost Lifeline programs still available,” the consumer advocate said. “Although PK agrees that all consumers should have access to high quality services, in this particular case, providing even minimal service is better than forcing the members of society most in need to forego communication services completely.” Similarly, Benton recommended that the Bureau consider if a \$50/month subsidy would be more realistic for Lifeline families moving forward.

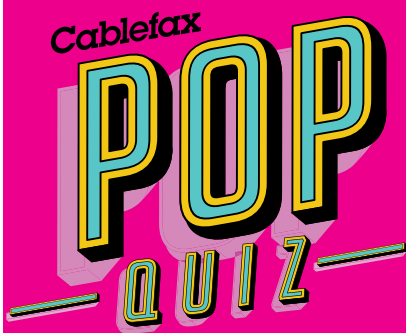
#### NETFLIX GROWTH FALLS SHORT

Subscriber growth significantly slowed for **Netflix** in 1Q21. The streaming juggernaut added 3.98 million subscribers and finished the quarter with 208 million paid memberships, up 14% YOY, but below its guidance of 210 million. In its letter to shareholders, Netflix attributed the number to the big

COVID-19 pull forward of 2020 and a lighter content slate in the first half of the year. “We continue to anticipate a strong second half with the return of new seasons of some of our biggest hits and an exciting film lineup. In the short-term, there is some uncertainty from COVID-19; in the long-term, the rise of streaming to replace linear TV around the world is the clear trend in entertainment,” the company said. Netflix said it’s back producing safely in every major market except Brazil and India. If that continues, it will spend more than \$17 billion in cash on content this year. Revenue for the streamer grew 24% YOY to \$7.16 billion. Netflix also announced a buyback program that will see it repurchase as much as \$5 billion in common stock beginning in 2021 with no fixed expiration date. It expects the program to begin this quarter.

#### APPLE TV UPGRADES 4K LINE

**Apple** unveiled the next generation of its Apple TV 4K device Tuesday, boasting a significant boost in graphics performance, video devoting and audio processing over previous iterations. Apple said it is working with video providers including **Fox Sports, Paramount+** and **NBCU** as they begin to stream in high frame rate HDR. The next generation Apple TV 4K will also come with a redesigned Siri Remote. The device will start at \$179. Customers will be able to place orders beginning April 30 with availability beginning in the second half of May in more than 30 countries and regions. For the first time, customers will also be able to purchase AppleCare+ for Apple TV. The service offers three years of technical support and additional hardware coverage as well as up to two incidents of accidental damage protection every 12 months.



Which defunct cable network was sold by Paul Allen’s Vulcan Ventures to G4 Media in 2004?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

Last week’s answer: Pat Buchanan and Tom Braden were the original hosts of CNN’s Crossfire

**SCTE UNVEILS NEW BOARD**

**SCTE** announced the appointment of a newly-formed board of directors with **Charter** evp/CTO *Stephanie Mitchko-Beale* serving as chairwoman. **Cox** svp, network engineering *Guy McCormick* is vice chair; **Comcast Cable** evp/chief network officer *Jan Hofmeyr* is treasurer; and **Rogers** svp, technical operations *Ron McKenzie* is secretary. Other members include **Mediacom**'s *Eddie Arnold*, **Commscope**'s *Frank Drendel*, *Ken Johnson* of **Cable One**, **Vyve Broadband**'s *Andy Parrott*, *Bill Warga* of **Liberty Global**, **GCI**'s *Victor Esposito*, **EnerSys**'s *John Hewitt*, *Catherine McNaught* of **Corning**, **Shaw**'s *Damian Poltz* and **Vodafone**'s *Michael Rabes*. To gain a seat on the board, each nominee must be a senior executive of a **CableLabs** member company or be an SCTE associate member with day-to-day executive responsibilities in engineering, technical operations or field operations.

**ESHOO, KINZINGER TARGET CYBERSECURITY**

Reps *Anna Eshoo* (D-CA) and *Adam Kinzinger* (R-IL) reintroduced the Understanding Cybersecurity of Mobile Networks Act, legislation that requires the **NTIA** to submit to Congress a report examining the cybersecurity of existing wireless networks. The report would also identify vulnerabilities across 2G, 3G and 4G networks to cyberattacks and surveillance from adversaries.

**FOX NEWS TOPS AGAIN, BIG WEEK FOR 'BIOGRAPHY'**

It was Fox News, **MSNBC** and **HGTV** taking first, second and third in prime for the second consecutive week. Fox News won the week among ad-supported cable with 2.284 million viewers, up from last week's 2.185 million. MSNBC slipped to 1.534 million from 1.658 million, while HGTV was up nearly 13% week-over-week to 1.349 million. – Sunday's premiere of "Biography: WWE Legends ('Stone Cold' Steve Austin)" on **A&E** was the franchise's best episode among 25-54s in over 16 years and 117% higher than the Biography average over the past 2 years. The ep delivered 626,000 25-54s. It was followed by the series premiere of "WWE's Most Wanted Treasures," which delivered 497,000 25-54s, making it the #2 series premiere of 2021 in ad-supported cable and A&E's best series premiere in the demo since "America's Top Dog" launched in Jan 2020. – **HGTV**'s "No Demo Reno" delivered a series best 0.71 L+3 rating among 25-54s and a 0.93 L3 rating among W25-54 on Thursday. The ratings were a respective 54% and 56% increase over the prior six weeks.

**FCC INTRODUCES ROBOCALL DATABASE**

The **FCC** is continuing on the robocall warpath, announcing the launch of a Robocall Mitigation Database Tuesday. The system includes a portal through which voice providers must file certifications regarding their efforts to stem the origination of robocalls on their networks. As of Sept 28, phone companies must refuse to accept traffic from voice providers not listed in the database.

**DISTRIBUTION**

**NFL Network** and **NFL RedZone** are coming to **Hulu + Live TV** by August 1. **NFL Media** and the **Disney**-owned vMVPD service inked a multi-year carriage deal, giving the League a direct con-

nection with cord-cutters. The deal follows last month's \$100 billion, 10-year media rights deal with Disney, **FOX**, **ViacomCBS**, **NBCUniversal** and **Amazon**. – **EstrellaTV** and **Estrella News** are now available on **VIZIO SmartCast** TVs. SmartCast users have 24/7 access to both networks. EstrellaTV, a Spanish-language television broadcaster, has more than 20,000 hours of available programming. Estrella News is described as the first network providing live news to Spanish-language audiences on a 24/7 multiplatform basis. – **Philo** will add **Crackle** to its streaming library. The platform will also add **Bloomberg TV** and **Revry** to its live TV lineup. –SVOD **Food Network Kitchen** is now available on the **Roku** platform in the US.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Discovery**'s going all in for Earth Day Thursday, with one-hour special, "Action Planet: Meeting the Climate Challenge." It features one-on-one interviews with Vice President *Kamala Harris*, scientific experts, individuals impacted by the climate crisis, business leaders and others. It will stream on **discovery+** and run on **OWN** at 9pm, Discovery at 10pm and **Science Channel** at 11pm. It will also premiere on **NowThis**' TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook channels. The special is a companion to discovery+ series "Action Planet" in partnership with NowThis Earth, which is debuting Thursday as well. – Mystery thriller "Bel Canto" will be exclusively available for free on **Crackle** starting May 1. – Four-part docuseries "Between Black and Blue" will be available on **Sundance Now** and **AMC+** May 25. – **CLEO TV**'s "Living by Design with Jake and Jazz" Season 2 premieres May 1 at 9pm ET. – YouTube announced a new slate of original programming focused on sustainability. The programming begins Thursday with the launch of "Create Together" Season 2 and the next installation of monthly learning series "BookTube" with *Bill Gates*.

**PEOPLE**

*Todd Porch* was named president of ad-tech company **Strat-egus**. Porch most recently served as vp, **Comcast Cable**'s **Effectv**. – **A+E Networks** promoted *Christopher Barry* to evp, financial and business planning. Before joining A+E Networks in 2012, Barry worked for **SundanceTV**. – **WWE** named *Chris Legentil* svp & head of global communications. Most recently, Legentil was svp of global communications at live sports streaming service **DAZN**. WWE tapped **Creative Artists Agency** senior talent agent *Scott Zanghellini* as its new head of revenue strategy and development. He's joined by CAA agent *Alex Varga*, who will serve as vp, revenue strategy and development.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

We're preparing our annual Top Ops magazine and are looking for exceptional MSOs and Independent Operators. **Cablefax**'s Top Ops recognizes excellence in a variety of areas, including marketing, technology, finance, lifetime achievement, customer service and community involvement. **Nominations** are open to all cable operators, but must be submitted by Friday, April 30.