

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Play Ball: Sports Refund Credits Continue to Trickle In

Some **Comcast** customers are seeing a third round of credits for sports that weren't played during the pandemic. **Cox** is gearing up to issue its first credits to consumers, while some smaller operators report that they are still in discussions for rebates.

Comcast issued initial credits in October for **MLB** games not played on RSNs, with millions more subscribers receiving a second credit in January 2021. Comcast said it has also been able to secure adjustments from some RSNs for **NBA** and **NHL** games not played and are passing those through as it receives them. "We remain committed to passing through 100% of the adjustments we receive to our customers," a spokesperson said.

The credit amounts vary by market. For example, a Comcast customer in the Atlanta metro area received a \$10.66 credit on their most recent bill, a \$7.58 credit in December and \$11.54 in October. Boston area residents saw a new credit of \$17.07 on top of previous credits of \$6.42 and \$4.55, according to the *Boston Globe*.

Cox told **CFX** its customers will see the first sports refund credits on their bills later this summer. Other operators, including **Charter**, **Mediacom** and **Verizon Fios**, have already been issuing credits. A smaller operator told us it was still in discussions, while a **TDS** representative said to-date, it has received two credits and expects a third credit to come this fall. As opposed to customer rebates, TDS is using the money

to offset future content costs, resulting in lower rate increases down the line. **Atlantic Broadband** said it has been successful with some sports networks and continues to advocate on behalf of subscribers, pledging to give a rebate for any funds credited to ABB to all eligible customers. Rather than multiple rounds of rebates, Charter issued a \$17.73 credit to qualified customers in February. It's continuing to monitor the situation and will make further determinations as appropriate.

The issue of sports fees has drawn the attention of New York Attorney General *Letitia James*, particularly given that many operators charged consumers RSN sports fees during the pandemic. James announced in late March that approximately four million New Yorkers had received some \$76 million in rebates for sports programming never provided during the pandemic. She made it clear at the time that she still expected tens of millions of dollars more in relief for consumers this year.

**S&P** has estimated the total amount of rebates for pay TV subs to be around \$1 billion. Last month, **Sinclair** revised its prior estimate of \$420 million in rebates to distributors by \$19 million less with the credit booked in 1Q21. Some \$133 million was paid in 1Q21, with another \$84 million expected to be paid in the remainder of 2021 and \$183 million expected to be paid in the first half of 2022. **MSG Networks** reported its fiscal 3Q21 results last month, reporting that affiliate fee revenue dropped \$11 million, in part due to a net unfavorable affiliate adjustment of \$5.8 million (primarily reflecting accruals for affiliate fee rebates) recorded in the current year quarter.



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## UNIVISION READYING SVOD

**Univision** is further leaning into streaming with the launch of an all-new SVOD offering in the US and Latin America in 2022. It will include a free ad-supported service anchored by Univision's current free Spanish-language streaming service, **PrendeTV**, as well as the SVOD featuring more than 6,000 hours of Spanish-language content and more than 30 original productions exclusively on the service within its first year. Pricing and launch date will be announced following the close of the **Televisa-Univision** merger later this year. The idea is to transition the existing **PrendeTV**, **VIX** and **Univision NOW** services into one global brand. *Rodrigo Mazon* has left his role as vp, content at **Netflix** to head up the venture as evp, gm of SVOD.

## VERIZON, EMPIRE ACCESS TOP PCMAG SPEED INDEX

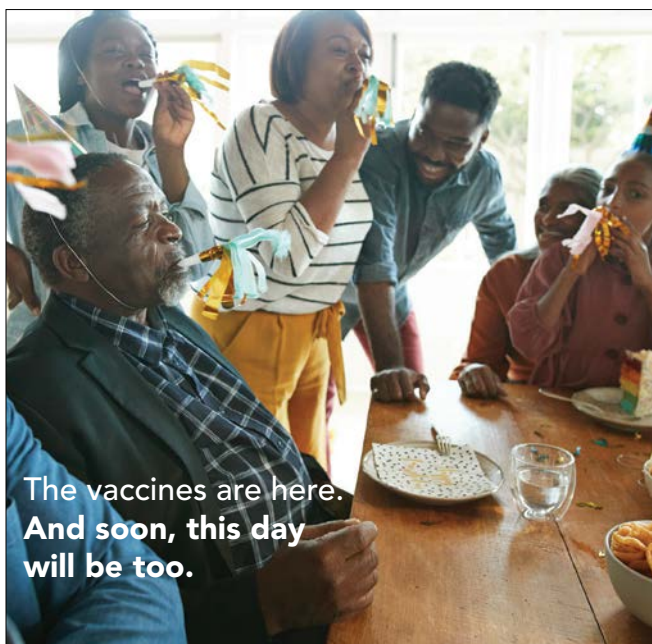
For the ninth time, **Verizon Fios** ranked as *PCMag's* fastest major ISP. The accolade came even though Fios' score on the *PCMag Speed Index* has been decreasing. It averaged 169.8Mbps this year, down from 174.5Mbps in 2020 and 186.1Mbps in 2019. It's still way ahead of second place finisher **Comcast** (139.6Mbps). Third place went to **Sparklight**, which leapfrogged to 124.4Mbps from 59.8Mbps in 2019. *PCMag's* title of fastest ISP, which includes all ISPs—even those with small footprints, goes to **Empire Access** with 366.2Mbps. None of the major ISPs are even close. It was followed by **Google Fiber** (300.3Mbps), **NextLight** (289.1Mbps), **Ting** (283.5Mbps) and **Hotwire** (247.9Mbps). Satellite broadband offering **Starlink** may be in beta, but it racked up enough customers using *PCMag's* Speed Test to earn a 70.8 score. That's 4.3 times faster than the next satellite internet provider.

## FCC EYES IOT DEVICE THREATS

The **FCC** is considering a draft order that proposes to use its equipment authorization rules to bar devices from entities deemed to present a national security risk. It also seeks comment on how the Commission could encourage manufacturers and other parties to improve the cybersecurity of equipment sold in the US, particularly with respect to the IoT devices. Commissioner *Geoffrey Starks* mentioned the proposal in his remarks Monday before **Ericsson's** Broadband for All online conference. He said the FCC has a vital role to play in ensuring that America's networks are safe. As the Internet of Things flourishes, he said regulators must ensure that those devices and the Americans who use them are protected from cyber-threats. "The Commission should work with other policymakers and retailers to ensure that all devices imported into the United States and connected to our networks meet NIST cybersecurity standards. We also must develop proactive safeguards to educate users and prevent future intrusions on our IoT networks," he said.

## LIBERTY BROADBAND, GCI MERGER SETTLEMENT

Former **GCI** Liberty directors, including *John Malone*, have agreed to \$110 million settlement to a proposed investor class action suit led by pension funds challenging its merger with **Liberty Broadband**. The May 5 settlement was revealed in Liberty Broadband's most recent 10-Q. "During March 2021 and in advance of the expenditure of significant time and costs to conduct the depositions proposed to have been taken in this action, the parties began negotiations for a potential settlement of this action," Liberty Broadband said. The agreement, which will have the plaintiffs dismiss their claims



The vaccines are here.  
And soon, this day  
will be too.



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with prejudice, is still subject to approval by the court. The case, Hollywood Firefighters' Pension Fund, et al. v. GCI, is in Delaware Chancery Court.

#### AT&T, TEXAS A&M LAUNCH PRIVATE 5G TESTBEDS

**AT&T** and the **Texas A&M University System's** RELLIS Campus is opening private 5G testbeds this fall to public and private sector organizations. Commercial customers will have the opportunity to access the testbeds to explore predicted use cases such as autonomous and connected vehicles, robotics, roadside safety and physical security. With this program, the RELLIS Campus will house one of the large-scale testing and evaluation sites for five of the **DOD's** 11 modernization priorities—hypersonics, AI, autonomy, cybersecurity and directed energy. Within the testbeds, Texas A&M will conduct proactive and reactive cybersecurity testing to identify vulnerabilities and protect data against external threats.

#### COX LAUNCHES COX EDGE

**Cox Communications** has launched a full stack edge-cloud computing service under its **Cox Business** line. The service, dubbed Cox Edge, is deployed from last-mile edge data centers, with offerings that will include Virtual Compute, Storage, Bare Metal, Edge CDN, Distributed Database services, Serverless computing, Distributed Containers, and Enterprise Kubernetes. The services are offered through an integrated user experience, so that developers can easily augment their cloud or on-premise deployments with edge capabilities. The goal is to help customers improve application performance and to reduce cloud transport and on-premise infrastructure costs.

#### MID-AMERICA SHOW BACK LIVE

Add the **Mid-America Cable Show** to the growing list of industry events planning in-person gatherings. Set for September 15-16 in Omaha, the annual **Mid-America Cable Telecommunications Association** gathering features an exhibit hall and conference sessions along with a special opening night reception at the world-renowned Henry Doorly Zoo. The event also features a silent auction and reception for MACS' annual [Weary Scholarship Foundation](#). The scholarship is available to cable industry employees, their spouses and children in the Mid-America region, with applications due Aug 1.

#### CHILD TAX CREDIT PSAS

**CommonSense Media** is launching a \$10 million public awareness initiative with the goal of ensuring low- and middle-income families know about the benefits available to them through the American Rescue Plan, and specifically the direct monthly child tax credit from the **IRS**. The campaign will include paid media, grassroots and digital media campaigns. Initial efforts will launch in Arizona, California, Georgia and West Virginia. The nonprofit plans to extend the initiative as it raises more funds. During the initial launch, the paid media campaign will include a texting program and PSAs distributed across cable and broadcast. The nonprofit is also partnering with groups such as the **NAACP**, **Educare early childhood centers**, the **California Association of Food Banks** and

others to spread the word. The campaign begins July 5 and will continue throughout the next 6 months.

#### GIGABIT LAUNCHES

**Cable One's Fidelity Communications** launched Gig internet service to two counties in Arkansas. The company is automatically upgrading Saline and Pulaski Counties residential customers with 250 Mbps speeds to its Gig service at no extra cost. Earlier in the year, the company completed a \$7.5 million upgrade to improve its fiber-rich network and strengthen its high-speed internet service in the counties. The upgrade spread across more than 520 miles and added almost 100 miles of fiber to the company's plant. – **TDS Telecom** completed its fiber network expansion in New Glarus, Wisconsin. The completed project connects more than 1,000 additional residential and business addresses with up to 1 Gig internet, TV and phone service. The upgrade also brings customers **TDS TV+**, a cloud-based TV service combining live TV with streaming services. Business customers in the build footprint can choose internet access and transport connections up to 10Gig via dedicated fiber and hosted VoIP **TDS managedIP**.

#### PROGRAMMING

Three **Law&Crime** series are now available on-demand on **Peacock**. True-crime docuseries "Buried with Love" and "Vanished" are available on the streamer with true crime series "Trial File." The additional content compliments the Law&Crime linear channel that launched on the service in March. – **Tennis Channel's** coverage of Wimbledon begins June 28 at 4:30pm ET. "Wimbledon Primetime" airs every day of the two-week event excluding July 4, when the tournament holds no matches. The typical daily schedule delivers two editions at 4:30pm ET and 8:30pm ET. The ladies' and gentlemen's singles and doubles championships on the weekend of July 10 and 11 will also be covered. – *J Hogan Gidley* and *Jenna Ellis* are joining **Newsmax** as on-air television contributors. Gidley is a former *Trump* White House top official and Ellis is a former senior legal advisor and personal counsel to Donald Trump. Gidley will offer analysis on political news and Ellis will bring legal and faith-based perspective to the 2022 and 2024 elections. – **Revolt** launched exclusive sermon series "Kingdom Culture with TD Jakes" Sunday. The show will air consecutive episodes on Revolt's linear channel every Sunday at 9am ET. – SVOD **True Royalty TV** is launching a collection of documentaries about *Princess Diana* in honor of her 60th birthday. Over 20 documentaries exclusive to the SVOD are included in the collection, including two new documentaries premiering to the US. "Diana: A Mother's Love" and "Diana at 60" premiere on the service on July 1.

#### PEOPLE

*Cherie Grzech* is leaving **Fox News** to join **NewsNation** as vp of news, managing editor. Her appointment is effective July 19. Grzech currently serves as vp, Fox News. – Telecom tech company **USTC Corp** hired *Tom McLaughlin* to serve as president. McLaughlin most recently served as svp, sales at **CommScope**.