

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Dollars and Cents: More Broadband Funding Should Go Towards Adoption

Nothing is set in stone in terms of how the \$65 billion in funding for broadband included in the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package approved by *President Biden* and a bipartisan group of senators. Based on the rumors spreading around Washington, though, far too much money will be devoted to deployment and too little set aside for adoption efforts.

“Adoption is two to three times a greater problem than deployment,” **ACA Connects** svp, government affairs *Ross Lieberman* said during a panel Tuesday hosted by the association. “This has been a consistent issue in the way that policymakers have been thinking about these two problems, and hopefully with the report and the information we’re providing, people can rethink this issue and how to properly allocate money.”

ACA Connects partnered with **Cartesian** on a report detailing how Congress could make gigabit service available to 19 million locations currently lacking access to high-quality service, and found that approximately 30 million households in the US do not subscribe to fixed broadband even when it is available. The rumored portion of the \$65 billion for broadband in Biden’s infrastructure package that has been designated for adoption issues is only \$5 billion. A similar split can also be seen in the LIFT America Act, legislation introduced in March by Democrats that would direct \$312 billion towards projects involving clean energy, drinking water, healthcare and broadband infrastructure. While \$80 billion of that funding is

allocated for deployment initiatives, only \$9.3 billion would go toward increasing broadband affordability and adoption.

Free Press research director *S Derek Turner* argued that the affordability and adoption issue won’t go away so long as there is such income inequality within the US. But he believes there are a variety of ways to get started on tackling it, and it certainly wouldn’t hurt if operators continue to offer lower-priced plans for families in need. Another idea could be to place additional obligations on providers who do take government money to lower their deployment costs.

Some have argued that a permanent federal subsidy a la the Emergency Broadband Benefit program could help bump those adoption numbers up. Former congressman *Greg Walden*, who now serves as chairman of **Alpine Advisors**, believes ACA Connects’ new data illustrating that the adoption issue is present in both urban and rural environments could convince Republicans to give a subsidy a closer look.

“My experience has been we’d be more likely to support the capital investment than to start a never-ending subsidization program, but I think the data pointed out that the very low income are the ones struggling the most to adopt broadband, even if it’s right there on their doorstep,” he said. “I think there’s probably room to do a subsidy. We certainly do in a lot of other areas. I think we ought to look at all these subsidies on a regular basis and say which ones are legacy ones we don’t need and which ones will make more sense going forward.”

Before any of these actions move forward, however, each of



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Magazine Publish Date: July 28

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the panelists said the **FCC** needs to hurry up and fix its mapping problem. *Blair Levin*, a non-resident senior fellow of the Metropolitan Policy Project at the **Brookings Institute**, said the lack of accurate maps has already led to some problems with the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and more money won't help anyone if history keeps repeating itself.

"There's a great desire to spend money right away to solve this problem," he said. "But the truth is we don't know what to do with the money because we don't have the maps yet."

FCC RELEASES REGIONAL EBB DATA

The **FCC** released more detailed Emergency Broadband Benefit enrollment numbers Tuesday, showing that more than 3 million households have signed up for the program thus far. The FCC's new program enrollments and claims tracker allows the public to search by zip code or state to see regional enrollment figures. Of the \$3.136 billion initially set aside for the program, \$3.101 billion remains available for disbursement to cable operators for broadband subsidies or subsidies for connected devices. Of the money that's already out the door, \$34 million was designated for monthly broadband support and \$311,873 was for reimbursing customers for one-time connected device purchases.

C-SPAN SHUTTERING 'THE COMMUNICATORS'

It's the end of an era. **C-SPAN's** "The Communicators" will air its final episode on July 31. "We recognize that programs and series run their life cycle, and staffing changes and new priorities are taking us in a different direction," C-SPAN told CFX in a statement. The half-hour interview series premiered back in October 2005 and is nearing the 800-episode mark. All episodes of the series can be found on C-SPAN.org.

NAB BOARD ELECTIONS

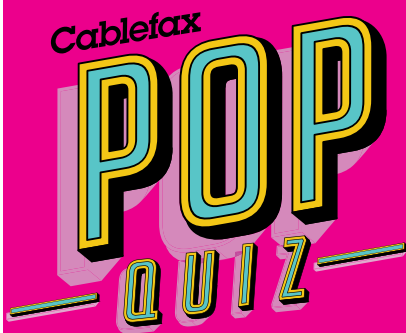
NAB announced the election of three board chairs Tuesday. *David Santrella*, president, broadcast media, **Salem Media Group** was elected chairman of its Joint Board. He succeeds *Jordan Wertlieb*, president, **Hearst Television**, whose term recently expired. **Townsquare Media Group** CEO *Bill Wilson* was elected chairman of the NAB Radio Board and **Nexstar** chair/CEO *Perry Sook* was elected NAB Television Board chairman.

COMMON SENSE UNVEILS CHILDREN'S STREAMER

Common Sense Networks, a for-profit affiliate of **Common Sense Media** and a **Public Benefit Corporation**, is launching its own AVOD service dubbed **Sensical**. It is designed for kids 2-10 and boasts an algorithm-free content library of more than 15,000 videos and 50+ topic-based channels. The service filters ads through a rubric and curation process based on child development research. It is available starting Tuesday on **iOS, Android, Roku, Amazon Fire TV** and **Apple TV**. **Sensical** will expand to all major distribution platforms including **VIZIO** by the end of summer 2021.

HBO MAX EXPANDS OUTSIDE US

HBO Max started rolling out in 39 territories throughout Latin America and the Caribbean Tuesday, marking its first launch outside the US. The streamer has committed to produce 100 local originals in Latin America over the next two years. Later this year, soccer fans in Brazil and Mexico will be able to view matches of the **UEFA Champions League**. HBO Max ad-free plan subscribers in the US can access the platform while traveling throughout any of the 39 territories, and subscribers in Latin America will be able to access it while traveling in the



One winner will be selected each week for a Starbucks gift card

Last week's answer: Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce was the fictional ad agency in AMC's "Mad Men"
Kudos to last week's winner: Bob Gold, Bob Gold & Associates

"Watch What Happens Live" host Andy Cohen served as evp, development and talent of which cable net until 2013?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

US. The streamer is offering a 50% discount off the regular monthly plan for Latin American fans as long as they maintain their subscription without interruption.

LOCAST TAKES COLUMBUS

Broadcast streaming app **Locast** has expanded into the Columbus, Ohio, TV market. The service, now serving 34 markets, will be available to 20 counties in the Columbus DMA. The city also houses university students who may qualify for the Locast Cares Program, which allows users who do not have the financial capability to donate to watch local TV channels via the service without donation request interruptions. The program is open to the first 25,000 applicants, lasts for one year, and is available for students, first responders and low-income households.

RATINGS

The 2021 **"BET Awards"** live premiere Sunday made it the #1 cable awards show among P18-49 for the 2021 broadcast season, with 2.4 million total viewers P2+ for the simulcast across seven **ViacomCBS** networks and 1.7 million total viewers P2+ on BET alone. Related content, including "The Countdown to BET Awards (719K P2+) and "DJ Cassidy's Pass The Mic: BET Awards Edition" (1.1 million P2+), drew over 4.6 million total viewers across the nets. – Season 2 of **HGTV's** "Unsellable Houses" garnered a .62 L+3 among P25-54 and a .86 L+3 rating among W25-54. The 13-week run also delivered a .80 L+3 rating among P2+ and a 1.61 L+3 household rating. Since the March 30 premiere, the series delivered more than 31 million total viewers. The late March debut ranked as a top 5 non-news/sports cable premiere in the Tuesday 9-10pm timeslot among W25-54, P2+ and Households. – **TNT** dominated cable primetime last week, averaging 2.252 million total viewers, beating out **ESPN's** 2.237 million. **Fox News** was knocked down to third in primetime with 2.184 million, followed by **MSNBC** (1.365mln) and **HGTV** (1.141mln). Fox News Channel came out on top in total day with an average of 1.25 million viewers. ESPN took second with 823,000 total day average viewers, followed by MSNBC (799,000). **CNN** (654,000) and **HGTV** (628,000).

CARRIAGE

Law&Crime Network launches on **YouTube TV** Tuesday, making its content available to over 3 million YouTube TV subscribers. – FAST channels **beIN Sports Xtra** and **beIN Sports Xtra en Español** are now available on **Canela.TV**. In addition to live event coverage, beIN Sports Xtra en Español will also premiere interview and commentary programming on the free service including "La Octava," "beIN the Interview" and "Reaccion en Cadena."

FOX NEWS SETTLES HUMAN RIGHTS PROBE

The **NYC Commission on Human Rights** announced a \$1 million settlement with **Fox News** following its investigation into sexual harassment and misconduct that took place at the network. Fox News said its pleased to have resolved the matter, noting that it involved an era before *Suzanne Scott* became

CEO. "We are pleased to reach an amicable resolution of this legacy matter. Fox News Media has already been in full compliance across the board, but cooperated with the New York City Commission on Human Rights to continue enacting extensive preventive measures against all forms of discrimination and harassment," the programmer said. The settlement, the largest civil fine in the Commission's history, requires Fox News to waive forced arbitration in agreements with employees, talent and contributors for any claims brought under the NYC Human Rights Law for a period of at least four years. It also requires Fox to implement, for at least two years, a policy and complaint procedure for reporting of discrimination and harassment complaints that allows for multiples levels of reporting.

PROGRAMMING

The Nathan's Famous Hot Dog-Eating Contest will air live Sunday on **ESPN Networks**. Coverage for the women's championship begins at 11:30am ET on **ESPN3**, followed by the men's championship at 12pm ET on **ESPN**. Encore presentations will air later on **ESPN2** at 4pm ET and **ESPNNews** at 6pm ET as well as Monday on **ESPNNews** at 11am and 5pm ET. Additionally, "30 for 30" will present an episode on the rivalry between competitive eaters *Joey Chestnut* and *Takeru Kobayashi* titled "The Good, The Bad, The Hungry" Thursday at 7:30pm ET on **ESPN**. – **TNT** is developing scripted drama series "Unknown," based on the *Liam Neeson* movie by the same name. – Comedy series "Work in Progress" will return for a second season on **Showtime** Aug 22 at 11pm. – **IFC** picked up softball comedy "Slo Pitch" for two seasons. Season 1 will premiere on **IFC.com** later this year. – Series "Chapelwaite," based on *Stephen King* short story "Jerusalem's Lot," is set to debut on **Epix** Aug 22 at 10pm.

NICKELODEON LAUNCHES WEARABLE FOR KIDS

ViacomCBS International announced its connected smart **Nickwatch** by **Nickelodeon** Tuesday. The wearable device provides entertainment and communication features and will be available for purchase in 2022. The company said the Nickwatch's platform will allow users to communicate with family and friends and promote physical activity using Nickelodeon characters. Text and voice calls can be made to pre-selected contacts and a trackable GPS function will be integrated into the device.

PEOPLE

Business software company **Freshworks** appointed *Randi Bryant* as its first chief diversity & inclusion officer. Bryant has formerly worked with **Comcast**, McDonald's, the NY Transit Authority and the US Dept of State to create inclusive work environments for employees.

DOING GOOD

The **Cable One** family of brands recently awarded more than \$100,000 in grants to 30 nonprofits across its 24-state footprint. The grants were provided through the Charitable Giving Fund, which awards \$200,000 in grants annually to local nonprofits served by the broadband provider. Applications for fall 2021 grant recipients run Oct 1-31.