

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Full Slate: FCC Business as Usual Despite Washington Uncertainty

The **FCC** is taking a deep dive into claims by some **ACA Connects** members that misconduct is occurring within the Emergency Broadband Benefit program. In an ex parte filed earlier this week, representatives from **Armstrong, Mediacom** and **WOW!** said some EBB providers were performing unauthorized benefit transfers in an effort to boost reimbursement numbers.

“We need to make sure this program is well run and fair to consumers. And if consumers are having problems, I’m going to encourage them to file a complaint with the FCC, in part because we will help them resolve those issues, but also because it allows us to identify patterns and practices that may be problematic,” Acting FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* said at a press conference following the Commission’s Open Meeting Thursday.

The ACA Connects members said their staffs noticed the misconduct when performing the routine task of reaching out to enrolled households after learning from the National Lifeline Accountability Database that they had been transferred out of the program. In most cases, the households were surprised to learn that because a benefit transfer had occurred, the family could no longer apply their up-to-\$50/month benefit toward the service they received from the ACA Connects member companies.

“Many of these households commonly assume the transfer occurred as a result of being contacted by another provider

that promised an attractive deal—including, in some cases, a free phone—but did not make clear that taking the deal, which the household did, would require the household to transfer its EBB benefit to that provider,” the ex parte said. The providers also claimed that the benefit transfers tend to increase near the end of the month, indicating that bad actors are trying to add households shortly before the “snapshot date” used by the Commission to reimburse providers for their provision of the subsidy.

The FCC now has some extra time to examine the issue, thanks to Congress’s efforts to sign a funding bill that would extend government funding through Dec 3. The House voted 254-175 Thursday to approve a Senate-passed funding bill in the late afternoon, and it awaits *President Biden’s* signature.

The agency had a plan in place for a potential government shutdown, and the available funds would allow Commission staff to keep working through October 11. A separate line of funding is used to power the Commission’s auction operations, and Rosenworcel assured all that a government shutdown would not disrupt plans for an auction of 4,060 flexible-use licenses in the 3.45-3.55GHz band, scheduled to kick off on October 5. **AT&T** and **T-Mobile** are among the 33 companies that have qualified to bid for 10MHz blocks of the mid-band spectrum.

What the frenzy over a potential government shutdown has done is push discussions surrounding the infrastructure bill promising to deliver billions for broadband deployment to the side. But all seemed back on course at our press time, with

#1 “MUST-HAVE”
TRADITIONAL TV NETWORK AMONG A18+



SOURCE: BETA RESEARCH BASIC NETWORK EVALUATION STUDY, JULY 2021. PERCENT OF TOTAL RATING 4/5 ON 5 POINT SCALE ON BEING A “MUST HAVE” CHANNEL. HISTORY IS TIED WITH DISCOVERY AND FOOD NETWORK. RANKING EXCLUDES NEWS AND SPORTS NETWORKS.

House Speaker *Nancy Pelosi* indicating that the bill was still on track to be voted on Thursday evening. Whether or not it passes remains to be seen. The panic has also drawn attention away from the still-empty fifth seat at the FCC and the naming of a permanent chair. Rosenworcel's term will come to close at the end of the year, and she didn't give any indication as to if she's heard anything from the White House on either open Commission position. She also did not indicate whether she would want to be re-nominated to the Commission at the end of her term, if that was an option posed by President Biden.

"I have no news to make on that front, but I can tell you that it is a privilege to come to work in this role for the American people every single day," she said.

EVERYBODY'S DEALING WITH COMCAST

Just call it Triple Threat Thursday. **Comcast** faced a series of high-profile deadlines Thursday. One of the biggest, but perhaps quietest is **Disney**. We reported [last month](#) that Comcast's agreement with Disney would expire in September. Neither side has made any noise or warned of potential blackouts—a good sign. It's a mega deal, the first new negotiation since the two announced a comprehensive, 10-year carriage deal in 2012. All signs have pointed to another deal getting done, even if it requires an extension (or two). The new pact is likely to include carriage of **ACC Network**, which Comcast has not offered since it was launched in August 2019. **MoffettNathanson** questioned whether the deal could be used as an opportunity to unwind Comcast's 33% ownership in **Hulu** ahead of Comcast's option to sell its stake in the streamer to majority owner **Disney** for at least \$27.5 billion in early 2024. The firm prefaced its comments as "wishful thinking," acknowledging that there's no indication the two will use the carriage negotiation to deal with Hulu. "Hulu has substantial value, and that value has almost certainly grown materially since **AT&T** exited the partnership in May 2019," said a research note. "For Comcast, Hulu represents a unique window of opportunity to dispel concerns about capital allocation priorities, and it adds to what is an already extraordinary capacity to return capital to shareholders. If Comcast executes on that opportunity, the conglomerate discount that has weighed on Comcast for some time now could finally begin to dissipate." The second big Thursday deadline is on the **NBCUniversal** side of the house, with **YouTube TV's** contract to carry the NBCU portfolio set to expire. **Twitter** was full of YouTube subs asking that the channels not be dropped Thursday, although there were some—especially those already paying for **Peacock Premium**—who welcomed the loss because YouTube promised to lower its monthly price by \$10 if the channels go.

And last is **MSG Networks**... The Knicks, Rangers, Devils RSN's contract with Comcast expires at midnight. This has been fun to watch unfold. As each NBC Sports RSN tweeted Thursday that YouTube TV may drop their live coverage of the 76ers, Celtics, etc... MSG Networks was retweeting each missive and adding, "While we're at it, let's also tell your parent company Comcast Xfinity not to drop New York sports!".

Cablefax Executive Round Up

We asked our Diversity List Honorees "Who deserves a biopic made about their life?"



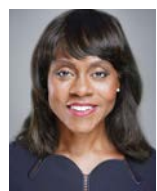
Zenita Henderson
VP, Marketing & Business Development
SCTE
"I would love to see a biopic about Shirley Jackson, the first African American woman to earn a doctorate at MIT. She was responsible for research that led to the invention of products such as the touch-tone phone, portable fax, fiber optic cables and caller ID."



Marva Johnson
GVP, State Government Affairs
Charter Communications
"There should be a biopic about the life and impact of Maya Angelou. Her profound talent for spinning words into imagery that reached the depths of her readers' souls is legendary. Many people would cherish the opportunity to get a deeper perspective into the experiences that shaped her life, her challenges, her successes, and the inspiration that fueled her exceptional genius."



Howard Lee
President
TLC Streaming & Network Originals
"I recently learned about Li Wenliang, a Chinese ophthalmologist who raised awareness of early COVID-19 infections in Wuhan. Li was dubbed a whistleblower by sharing information on the severity of the virus and was admonished because of it. Not too long afterwards, he contracted the disease and died at age 34. The Chinese government later conducted an official inquiry which exonerated him, and offered an apology to Li and his family. His is a powerful story about the incredibly steep price some people pay for doing the right thing, and more people should know his name."



Wonya Lucas
President & CEO
Crown Media Family Networks
"My uncle, Hank Aaron, deserves a biopic because he broke barriers on the baseball field and in every aspect of his life, including the corporate boardroom. Despite facing unfathomable hatred, he led his life with kindness, humility, and pride. These are universal lessons for living a gracious life of achievement and purpose worthy of further examination."

E&C LEADERS ASK GAO TO WEIGH IN ON BROADBAND

Reps *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ), *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA), *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) and *Bob Latta* (R-OH) of **House Commerce** reached to the **Government Accountability Office** asking for a review of how federal agencies can better work together to streamline broadband deployment. In a letter, the foursome asked for responses to questions in regards to how **NTIA** is overseeing coordination among federal agencies in regards to broadband and spectrum policy. They also questioned to what extent broadband providers have faced additional siting or permitting costs in areas where federal permitting processes have not been streamlined.

EVERCORE TRIMS ALTICE PT

Evercore cut **Altice USA's** price target to \$30 from \$44, reflecting higher capital investment and lower buyback activity. The firm is keeping the stock at "outperform" as it sees upside potential over the next year—though it said that's more likely to be concentrated in the second half of 2022. Evercore lowered its 2022 FCF estimate to \$1.06 billion from \$1.5 billion, partly due to higher investment spending. The analysts don't see any near-term catalysts for the stock with investors needing to see a return of sub growth for meaningful movement, but they believe it's at an attractive entry point for long-term investors.

CARRIAGE

Hogar de HGTV is now available on **Verizon Fios**. The Spanish-language lifestyle channel will launch soon on **Cox**, **Charter** and **Mediacom**, with additional carriage deals to be announced shortly. – **AccuWeather NOW** is now part of **Plex's** roster of nearly 200 free-to-stream live TV channels. The streaming service is a complement to **AccuWeather Network**, which reaches 36 million households.

TELEMUNDO COMMITS TO HISPANIC HEALTH

NBCU's Telemundo Enterprises embarked on a year-long partnership with the National Hispanic Medical Association Thursday to support vaccination efforts and health-related programs for the Hispanic community. As part of the collaboration, Telemundo plans to host virtual talks about vaccine safety and accessibility with experts in both English and Spanish as well as bilingual phone banks with community partners. It will also develop broadcast, digital and social media segments and campaigns tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROMOTIONS

Boost Mobile will exclusively launch the Celero5G to its customers this fall. New and existing customers who preorder the 5G-enabled device will get 12 full months of free unlimited talk, text and data for \$279. The offer is available through Oct 31.

PBS TOPS DOC EMMYS

PBS easily led Documentary Emmy wins Wednesday night, scoring 10, including for "Frontline's Amazon Empire: The Rise and Reign of Jeff Bezos." **Netflix** received four wins, including Outstanding Investigative Documentary for "Athlete A," while **Showtime's** three Emmy wins included "Kingdom of Silence," which examines the assassination of Washington Post journalist *Jamal Khashoggi*.

COMMSCOPE EMBRACES LOW LATENCY

CommScope released a new gateway Wednesday developed to deliver on the promises of low latency. The TG644x gateways allow service providers to deliver multi-gigabit data rates around homes and small businesses and dynamically adjust to meet the demands of tasks that require increased upstream capacity, including video conferencing. For gamers and others looking to avoid delays in their online activities, the gateways support CommScope's Low Latency DOCSIS solution and WiFi 6, two capabilities designed to reduce latency and jitter.

INTERNATIONALLY SPEAKING

ViacomCBS closed its previously announced acquisition of **Chilevisión** from **WarnerMedia**. The deal includes Chile's most-watched TV channel year-to-date along with Chilevisión's library and production facilities. Financial terms weren't disclosed.

EFFECTV OFFERS PERSONALIZED AD OPPS

Comcast Cable's ad sales arm, **EffectTV**, is offering a virtual automotive showroom through X1 for advertisers to showcase their brands' short and long form content. It's just one of four new destinations Comcast subs can reach via remote or on demand. The virtual automotive showroom features content curated from *MotorTrend Magazine's* auto related library. EffectTV is also directing advertisers to Hometown Hub, enabling advertisers to showcase their brand on specific Xfinity Hometown Hub pages for desired cities; Comcast Career Center, where employers can share info about their organizations and cultures; and the soon-to-launch Comcast Knowledge Center, which will focus on continued learning and is aimed at education advertisers.

PROGRAMMING

Fox News is honoring its history with a special Sunday at 10pm. "Fox News Channel: 25 Years" will feature behind the scenes footage from the network's early years as well as interviews with the people who were a part of its launch. – Coming to **EPIX** on Dec 5 is "Mr. A & Mr. M: The Story of A&M Records," a two-part doc on the record label and its approach to talent. – **ViacomCBS** acquired **CBS** drama "FBI" from **NBCU** in a multi-year content arrangement that includes domestic streaming rights. ViacomCBS also secured non-exclusive media rights for its portfolio of U.S. cable nets. The first three seasons are available to stream on Friday for **Paramount+** subscribers in the U.S. The fourth and current season will continue to air on CBS and be available to stream live and on demand on the CBS app and Paramount+.

PEOPLE

Ramsey Naito was upped to lead the animation division at **Paramount Animation**, while continuing in her role as president of **Nickelodeon Animation**. *Mireille Soria* is exiting as Paramount Animation's chief. – **WarnerMedia** promoted *Brian Robillard* to assistant GM and VP of business operations for its Kids & Family and Adult Swim properties. He will oversee business management of Cartoon and Adult Swim content activity as well as lead a newly created music strategy arm for the Kids, Young Adults, and Classics group. *Michael "Kiko" Akiko* has joined as executive director, music for Kids, Young Adults, and Classics, reporting into Robillard.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Chucky's Out of the Toy Box Again

With eight movies in the “Child’s Play” canon, it may seem like there’s nothing left to know about Chucky—the blue-eyed, overalls-wearing serial killing doll that first bloodied the scene in 1988. But **USA** and **Syfy** believe there’s still plenty of playtime left, with TV series “Chucky” set to premiere on both networks on Oct 12 at 10pm. And really, there is a lot to unpack. For those unfamiliar with the horror icon’s origin story: serial killer *Charles Lee Ray* was killed, but a voodoo ritual allowed his soul to inhabit a child-sized doll, then mayhem ensues. “Exploring Charles Lee Ray’s origins has been something the fans have wanted to see and have been asking for literally for decades now,” showrunner and Child’s Play creator *Don Mancini* told reporters during the recent **TCA** Summer Tour. “One of the reasons I was excited about taking the franchise into the medium of television was having so much storytelling real estate—eight hours of Chucky.” One of the fun facts we learned during the TCA session is the series has its own “blood team.” “I’m telling you, there’s a lot of people on this team,” said *Jennifer Tilly*, who returns in the series as Chucky’s bride. Also back in the TV version is Chucky’s potty mouth, with Mancini assuring us he drops plenty of f-bombs. Chucky’s latest saga comes after teenager *Jake (Zackary Arthur)* makes the unfortunate decision to buy the doll at a yard sale. The rest is history repeating itself, in the form of multiple murders and visits from people associated with Chucky’s past. At 14, Arthur was shielded from Chucky for most of his life. “When I was growing up, my parents... didn’t want me watching gory stuff. But I remember back in elementary school, the kids who watched the Chucky movies, they were the cool kids,” he said during TCA. “I was like, ‘Man, I wish I was like that.’” And that, folks, is exactly how Chucky ends up in your teen’s bedroom. – *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

“The Problem With Jon Stewart,” streaming, **Apple TV+**. To viewers of a certain age and viewpoint, *Jon Stewart* is a legendary comic. So, having him back on screen after nearly 6 years, with new eps every other week, is welcome news. Stewart has at least two sides of him that are less famous than his nightly schtick on **Comedy Central**’s “The Daily Show.” Similar to some, but not all, comedians, Stewart is a top-notch improviser. His improvised sessions with **TCA** critics were must-attends for the subdued (some would say humorless) TV writers. Another side of Stewart is his activism. His work on behalf of veterans and 9/11 first responders is admirable. The question we have about his new show is whether or not his fans—like us all, mired in the pandemic’s near-suspended animation—will want to watch Stewart being mostly serious. Yes, Stewart’s dry, deadpan humor remains. There are laugh-out-loud moments in his opening monologue. Still, the majority of this series, at least the first two eps sent to critics, is serious. In ep 1, Stewart discusses young veterans suffering from cancer due to exposure from burn pits’ noxious fumes. It’s compelling, as his interview of the Veterans Affairs secretary *Denis McDonough*. If you’re wondering if Stewart has the chops to handle hard topics, watch McDonough squirm. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (09/20/21-09/26/21)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
ESPN	0.922	2873
FNC	0.756	2356
MSNBC	0.432	1346
NFL	0.347	1079
HGTV	0.308	959
TLC	0.265	825
HALL	0.244	760
CNN	0.243	757
DISC	0.242	753
INSP	0.232	723
FOOD	0.224	698
TBSC	0.214	665
USA	0.208	649
TNT	0.175	545
ID	0.171	532
HIST	0.165	515
TVLAND	0.150	466
HMM	0.145	452
WETV	0.140	436
ESPN2	0.134	418
AMC	0.130	404
A&E	0.127	396
NBCSN	0.124	387
GSN	0.122	379
FRFM	0.121	378
LIFE	0.119	369
BRAVO	0.117	366
FX	0.117	365
PARA	0.101	313
NATGEO	0.099	308
TRAVEL	0.093	289
SYFY	0.090	280
NAN	0.089	276
NICK	0.086	268

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



Congratulations to all the Honorees!

Our annual must-read highlights operators that are smashing it including MSO of the Year, Charter, and Independent Operator of the Year, TDS.

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