

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Butter My Broadband: Land O' Lakes is Tackling the Digital Divide

What's the CEO of **Land O' Lakes** doing speaking to a conference of broadband and cable operators?

You could chalk up *Beth Ford's* appearance at **ACA Connects** and **NCTC's Independent Show** Tuesday to the fact Land O' Lakes is a 100-year-old farmer-owned cooperative or to her being the sister of **WOW!** SVP of Legal Affairs *Kathy Ford*. But perhaps most importantly Land O' Lakes has launched the "American Connection" project to focus on digital inclusion in rural America—and it's looking for help.

To date, Land O' Lakes has partnered with more than 170 different organizations and has used the power of its cooperative network to launch more than 3,000 WiFi hotspots across 49 states. And it's jumped in and advocated for broadband investment and policy changes. "Food security is a national security issue. We should want vibrancy in these communities because it makes all of us stronger as a nation," said Ford.

Land O' Lakes has partnered with **Com Net** in Ohio (which counts former ACAC COO *Rob Shema* as CEO), and it's working with **Cisco** as well as **Microsoft's** Airband initiative to extend WiFi. "Any of you who have interest in partnering with us—we have tall structured assets, silos and other things we can leverage in communities to partner with you," Ford said. "We would love to connect with you, the folks who know these communities most, who have the best capability, who have the expertise, so that we can make progress with speed versus

trying to guess who is it that we should be working with."

The cooperative also is pressing for more federal dollars for broadband deployment. Ford is excited about the proposed \$65 billion in the infrastructure bill, noting Land O' Lakes had actually pushed for \$80 billion. Despite the recent delays, she believes the measure will get passed. "What we're seeing right now, I think, is the sausage making," she said. "I do believe that there's an understanding by most, certainly legislators, and definitely business leaders, that an infrastructure investment right now is critical."

Land O' Lakes also has formed the American Connection Corps, led in conjunction with Lead for America and funded through the support of Heartland Forward and 19 additional partner organizations. Fifty Fellows receive two-year fellowships to serve as community leaders in their hometowns to focus specifically on connectivity. "These young folks who have gone to college, who want to go back to their hometowns... and kind of be a tech fellow who can work on implementation because even with the funding, let's agree there's some complexity once you have to try to get that on the ground and implement it," Ford said.

### READING THE REGULATORY TEA LEAVES

DC experts gave **Independent Show** attendees the lowdown on what's going on inside the Beltway these days. While uncertainty reigns right now, there's a feeling that this is the calm before the storm. There hasn't been as much partisan bickering over broadband regulation, in part because of the



Enter at [www.RegionalRainmakers.com](http://www.RegionalRainmakers.com)

## ABOUT REGIONAL RAINMAKERS

The **Cablefax Regional Rainmakers** honors the operators, programmers, executives, associations and lobbyists who are making outstanding contributions at local and/or regional levels – be it in operations, affiliate sales, news and sports programming, state legislation, lobbying and more.

focus being put on Big Tech. The fact the **FCC** isn't fully staffed and that there just haven't been many telecom hearings also have contributed. "I think the trend lines overall in broadband regulation have been getting more and more partisan over time. I think once the FCC gets to a full slate of commissioners, it's going to be at the FCC where we're going to see the Democrats, the Progressives, that movement of policies that the Republicans are known to strongly disagree on," said Ross *Lieberman*, SVP of Government Affairs for **ACA Connects**. "We can all take a deep breath this year, but next year's going to be much worse." Those issues at play are likely to be Title II net neutrality regulations, price transparency, multi-tenant broadband contracts, rate regulation, etc, explained *Tom Cohen*, Partner at **Kelley, Drye & Warren**. "But there are all sorts of other items. There's privacy regulation. Imagine California's privacy rules across the country," he said. Operators should also keep an eye on the sky, with *Elon Musk* and **SpaceX's Starlink** satellite broadband service getting a ton of buzz. "Members have been invited to go watch rocket launches. That is exciting and fun, and it's very different than saying we'd like to show you our headend," warned **Alpine Group** Chairman *Rhod Shaw*. "We know Congress loves disruptors. When disruptors come in, they love trying to figure out how to help and unleash... I do think we need to keep it in mind even if we don't think it will be a direct competitor, or we don't think it takes market share or won't hit the speeds necessary." As for the year ahead, Shaw's not sure Dems can get a majority at the FCC given the partisanship in Washington. "I'm not sure there is a deal attractive enough to *Mitch McConnell* to seek

a third Democratic Commissioner,” he said. “We have to play the game as if that nomination will occur, that vote will occur and get through the finish line. But in reality, my gut tells me if we get to bet, I might bet that never gets seated in 2022.”

## DISH, TEGNA THREATEN BLACKOUT

Keep your eyes on the clock. **DISH** and **TEGNA's** retransmission consent deal expires at 9pm ET Wednesday, and neither side is signaling optimism that a renewal will come ahead of time. TEGNA began warning its customers of a potential blackout Tuesday, but is still engaged in active discussions with DISH on a new agreement. The current deal was set to expire earlier, but TEGNA said it had provided the satellite operator with an extension beyond the original contract deadline to give them more time to find the right deal. "Thus far, DISH has refused to agree to such terms, which is why we have begun informing DISH customers that they may lose access to their local TEGNA station and our valuable programming," a TEGNA spokesperson said in a statement. DISH claims that TEGNA is out-of-line with its proposed fee increase, arguing that the current proposal would see the satellite provider put up nearly \$1 billion in fees for TEGNA's programming. "Business should have the opportunity to be profitable, but there's a big difference between running a profitable business and taking blatant advantage of consumers," DISH TV Group President *Brian Neylon* said in a statement. "As many Americans look forward to tuning in to football games this fall, and stay aware of the latest health and safety news, we hope TEGNA sees how important it is to come to a deal that is beneficial for all." DISH isn't afraid of a blackout, particularly with broadcasters.

# Corporate Licenses

# Cablefax Daily

## WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST.

**Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization.**

**Find out more! Contact Client Services at**  
**ClientServices@accessintel.com**

**www.cablefax.com**



Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | [www.cablefax.com](http://www.cablefax.com) | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, [amaclea@accessintel.com](mailto:amaclea@accessintel.com) | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Cynopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, [rcaploe@accessintel.com](mailto:rcaploe@accessintel.com) | Managing Editor: Sara Wingardner, 301.354.1701, [swingardner@accessintel.com](mailto:swingardner@accessintel.com) | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, [ekamhi@accessintel.com](mailto:ekamhi@accessintel.com) | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, [kschaeffer@accessintel.com](mailto:kschaeffer@accessintel.com) | Production Manager: Joann Fato, [jfato@accessintel.com](mailto:jfato@accessintel.com) | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, [ksmith@accessintel.com](mailto:ksmith@accessintel.com) | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, [clientservices@accessintel.com](mailto:clientservices@accessintel.com) | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

Last December, its agreement with **Nexstar** expired and 164 stations in 115 markets went dark on DISH's lineup for three weeks. It is still in the process of negotiating a long-term renewal of its retrans consent arrangement with **Sinclair**. DISH's deal with Sinclair was originally set to expire on August 16, but a series of short-term renewals have kept the stations available to the satellite provider's customers.

#### MSG SCORES VERIZON RENEWAL

**MSG Networks** inked a multi-year deal with **Verizon Fios**, adding some competitive pressure to **Comcast** which has been without the RSN since Oct 1. Verizon Fios' footprint encompasses much more of the NY DMA than Comcast's, which is concentrated in Central and North Jersey, plus a small swath of Connecticut. MSG is home to the New York Knicks, New York Rangers, New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders, Buffalo Sabres and New York Red Bulls, with the first Knicks regular season game slated for Oct 20.

#### CAMPBELL LANDS AT PEACOCK

*Kelly Campbell* has found a new home at **Peacock**. Starting in November, she'll serve as president of the **NBCU**-owned streamer, joining the leadership team under *Matt Strauss*, Chairman of Direct-to-Consumer and International. Campbell announced her departure from **Hulu** on Monday after four years at the company. She joined Hulu in 2017 as the company's CMO before replacing *Randy Freer* as its president in February 2020.

#### INDY SHOW NOTEBOOK

Alas... No **ACA Connects Summit** in Washington next year and no **NCTC Winter Conference**. However, both organizations have pledged instead to host regional gatherings on the road and to bring members to DC to their story to lawmakers. Stay tuned. As for **The Independent Show**, it's expected to be held in person at the Disney Yacht & Beach Club in Disney World July 24-27. – **NCTC** reached a new deal with **AdTran** to offer its line of OpenSync certified devices at competitive pricing. The initial offering will include three devices that will be available on marketplace soon, and additional devices will be added in the coming months as they become OpenSync certified by **Plume**, according to *Steve Beardslee*, VP of Broadband and Video Solutions for **NCTC**.

#### NAMIC NOTEBOOK

**NAMIC's** 35th Annual Conference is a celebration of many things, and it took time during its annual awards ceremony Wednesday to honor the Next Generation Leaders doing everything they can to offer new pathways and opportunities for success to those around them. **Charter** SVP/Chief Diversity Officer *Rhonda Crichlow* pushed how important it is to be a strong example for those around you both in your professional life and in your community. "I'm really very honored to have the opportunity not only to lead diversity and inclusion but to have oversight over our community impact efforts as well because I also know based on my own background and experiences the value of seeing organizations like Charter playing an active role in the community," Crichlow said. **ESPN** SVP & Editor-At-Large, **ESPN Content** *Rob King* said he considers DEI efforts to be his

second full-time job, adding that he'll never stop advocating for more inclusive workplaces. "He's the first person to call out a victory or to celebrate an individual, and he's just so well regarded around the CEO leadership table, but also across and throughout the entire ESPN organization," *Jimmy Pitaro*, Chairman of ESPN and Sports Content, said. "My kids like to say compassion is the new cool, and Rob is as cool as they come." **Cox Communications** SVP, Law & Policy *Joiava Philpott* encouraged others not to be afraid of taking risks, crediting her mentors for giving her that advice early and often. "I have been encouraged to step out there and to be comfortable with discomfort, and to really just understand that we have to move beyond our fears. Once we start doing this, we start leading by example," Philpott said. "That really does empower others to do the same." **NBC** Asian America Editorial Director *Jessica Prois* offered to do anything she can to champion other journalists like herself who are committed to shedding light on the stories of diverse communities. "Newsrooms seek to tell the story of an increasingly diverse audience, and the storytellers should reflect that," she said. "As journalists, we bring our whole selves to our stories while maintaining journalistic integrity, and I think readers trust us to do that and to tell the wonderfully varied stories of our communities in true and representative ways."

#### AT&T, FRONTIER PARTNER ON NETWORK SHARING

**AT&T** and **Frontier Communications** have struck a network agreement that will allow AT&T to serve enterprise customers in areas where it does not own fiber or plan to build a fiber network. Frontier plans to make its fiber service available to 600,000 new locations by the end of 2021, giving it a total of 4 million fiber locations passed. This deal will allow AT&T to use Frontier's fiber network to reach enterprise customers within Frontier's service area.

#### FOX WEATHER LAUNCHING OCT. 25

**Fox News Media's** AVOD *Fox Weather* is set to enter the atmosphere on Oct. 25. The service also announced it has signed WABC-TV meteorologist *Amy Freeze*—and, yes, that is her real name. Fox Weather will be available for free at foxweather.com and through the FOX Weather app for iOS and Android. FOX Weather will also be available on internet-connected TVs via FOX NOW, the FOX News app, and **Tubi**.

#### ON THE LIVE EVENT CIRCUIT

**Realscreen Summit** updated its health and safety protocols for its gathering in Austin, Texas, Jan 25-28. Attendees must be either fully vaccinated or undergo (and pay for) daily on-site rapid antigen testing for COVID-19. – The **2021 Incompas Show** (Oct 25-27, Las Vegas) unveiled its lineup of keynote speakers, which includes **DISH** EVP of Corporate Development *Tom Cullen* discussing the progress being made on 5G. Other speakers include **Mammoth Networks** CEO *Brian Worthen* and **Tilson** CEO *Josh Broder*.

#### PEOPLE

**ESPN** hired **HBO's** *Cecile Cross-Plummer* as VP, Corporate Communications. She will lead communications efforts for "The Undefeated" brand and will enhance outreach to multicultural audiences as part of ESPN's audience expansion initiative.



## Think about that for a minute...

### The New Netflix Reality

Commentary by Steve Effros

Facebook is not the only one facing headwinds these days, they're just the one getting most of the headlines. A new reality is about to dawn on Netflix as well, but in a very different way.

But first, Facebook. We've all been hearing a great deal about the purloined documents and emails distributed by a former employee who complains, rightly, that Facebook changed its core algorithm to focus on the sensational rather than maintain a chronological portrayal of information. Yes, that has to be looked at as to how it exacerbates our increasing factionalism. That societal divide is getting very dangerous, and enhancing sensationalism certainly doesn't help.

Some of the other complaints being voiced are less convincing to me, such as the one suggesting that the company is putting its business first, not the good of society. That's probably true of most companies, and if they didn't, their stockholders would probably sue! Think of all the companies that continue to load their products with refined sugar even after knowing (from public as well as their private studies) that the diabetes epidemic is directly related! Anyway, there are certainly enough things to keep the regulators and legislators busy regarding Facebook.

But Netflix is going to get its comeuppance, in a way, directly from the labor force it relies on rather than any governmental entity. You may have been hearing the rumblings about a strike about to take place. Well, it's a lot more important to our business than just characterizing it as a "Hollywood" dispute.

IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) is about to go out on strike. Over ninety percent of IATSE members supported the strike call, and it would appear that the other entertainment labor force folks, from actors to writers, are in support. What's it all about? In one word: streaming.

Movies and television shows require a huge amount of labor. The folks behind the cameras are amazing, and have skills that are very hard to duplicate. I learned that personally when I got the chance to be on the set of a movie my son, who makes his living as an actor, director and writer, was filming. It was stun-

ning how many folks were working full time to make that film process work! And as he points out, those folks are currently in some cases being paid wages the equivalent of a store clerk!

Why? Because when streaming services first came on the scene no one knew what would happen, or if they would even survive. They got a cut-rate deal on labor costs, including both in terms of amount of pay and amount of time worked. Traditional movie and television deals were much more expensive to produce and the Netflixs' of the world said they couldn't begin to compete if they had to pay those rates. So they got a great deal, and they've refused to renegotiate that deal ever since!

But we're in a new world. Netflix, using it as an example, is now the focus of most of the theatrical awards. It's spending billions of dollars creating new product and the other companies chasing it are doing the same. Clearly, streaming has come a long way, and is now not only fully competitive, but some would argue it's becoming dominant. And it's doing so with cut-rate labor.

Netflix argues that it shouldn't have to renegotiate now because it's still not clear how their business plan will work, or whether it will be truly profitable. Forget the stock market valuation. But that just doesn't fly any more. Whether the streaming business plan works or not will depend on its true costs, and that includes actually paying full value for the labor to create its products. That's going to have to be the new Netflix reality.



*Steve*

T:202-630-2099  
steve@effros.com

(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



**Membership good  
thru Dec 31, 2022!**

Join our global network of innovative thinkers, take part in industry collaboration, and play a role in the conversations that matter. Want in?

Visit [scte.org](https://www.scte.org)

**SCTE**  
a subsidiary of CableLabs®

\*Applies to new members only