Cablefax Daily

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Not So Fast: Mediacom Fights Against Rip & Replace Changes

A request by the **Rural Wireless Association** for the **FCC** to prioritize Eligible Telecommunication Carriers [ETCs] for funding to remove and replace communications equipment deemed harmful isn't sitting well with **Mediacom**.

Last July, the FCC actually replaced a previous scheme that did prioritize ETCs, and instead—at Congress' behest—prioritized funding for applicants with two million or fewer customers, regardless of ETC status. The money is for equipment, such as that from **Huawei** and **ZTE**, that the government has identified as a security risk.

"RWA's petition must be dismissed because (1) the Commission was statutorily obligated to revise its prioritization scheme and RWA fails to either provide any basis under which the Commission may ignore Congressional directive or to identify any material error in the Commission's implementation of its statutory obligation; (2) the Commission already considered the concerns raised by RWA; and (3) reinstituting the prior scheme would not serve the public interest," Mediacom told the FCC in its opposition comments filed on Friday.

The removal of the ETC prioritization is important for cable operators, which have historically not had ETC status. Some are applying to become ETCs now in certain markets because it's a condition for receiving Rural Digital Opportunity Funds for broadband projects. However, for the most part, cable doesn't see the need to receive ETC designation, particularly given that it could open the door to additional regulation by state public utility commissions. Cable has long been wary of the ETC designation, with it keeping some operators from applying for Connect America Fund II money.

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"While most ETCs have two million or fewer customers, meaning they will still receive priority treatment and likely be fully funded, the same is not true of other non-ETC providers with two million or fewer subscribers, such as cable operators," Mediacom told the FCC. "A national security threat to those cable operators' networks is no less harmful to consumers than a threat to ETCs' networks. But prioritizing ETCs instead of cable operators and other smaller providers would likely impede their ability to remove and replace insecure equipment. Not only would that be contrary to Congress' intent to support smaller providers, but it would also defeat the very purpose of the Reimbursement Program – to ensure that all problematic equipment and services are removed from the Nation's communications supply chain."

In its petition, RWA said the FCC should reconsider its decision not to prioritize ETCs, arguing that Congress didn't actually require the agency to make the shift and that it's instead reinterpreting the rules. RWA and **NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association** warn that forcing ETCs to incur additional, unfunded costs to comply with the rip and replace mandate would impose a huge burden and force ETCs out of the USF program, to the detriment of their subscribers.



Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax:The Magazine.



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FTC, DOJ SEEK TO REWRITE MERGER RULES

The **FTC** and **DOJ** Antitrust Division launched a proceeding to take public comment for the next 60 days on how to better detect and prevent illegal, anticompetitive mergers. "While periodic review of existing guidance is good practice generally, this review of the merger guidelines is especially timely and right. Global deal making in 2021 soared to \$5.8 trillion—the highest level ever recorded, with the FTC and DOJ receiving more than double the number of merger filings received on average in any of the past five years," FTC Chair *Lina Khan* said during a press conference Tuesday. The event coincidentally came hours after news broke of the latest big merger, **Microsoft** buying **Activision/Blizzard** for nearly \$70 billion. The new guidelines could signal additional scrutiny for big tech, with the notice including several questions focused on digital markets.

AMG, GOOGLE SIGN EXPANSIVE PARTNERSHIP

Byron Allen's **Allen Media Group** and **Google** revealed a multi-year, multi-platform partnership Tuesday that includes an expanded carriage agreement with **YouTube TV**. The Weather Channel and a select group of other networks under the AMG umbrella will be the first to come to YouTube TV with other nets to launch later. No dates were specified as to when those networks will come to the vMVPD. Additionally, Allen Media Digital, a new division of AMG, and Google will work together to make AMG-owned streaming services available to more Android devices via Google Play. AMG will utilize Google Cloud moving forward to build apps faster and unlock new data insights as well as Al and machine learning capabilities.

Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

"By leveraging Google's technology, distribution, marketing, ad sales platforms, enormous capital support, and expertise, Allen Media Group will seamlessly build and enhance our reach and revenue worldwide," Allen said in a statement.

YOUTUBE ORIGINALS NO MORE, DANIELS DEPARTING

Susanne Daniels, **YouTube**'s Global Head of Originals, is stepping down on March 1 and the company as a whole is pivoting away from its YouTube Originals initiative. While its YouTube Originals slate won't be completely gone, expect a serious reduction in content investment overall and a larger reliance on the creators that call YouTube home. "Going forward, we will only be funding programs that are part of our Black Voices and YouTube Kids Funds," YouTube Chief Business Officer *Robert Kyncl* said in a tweet and letter to creators. "We will honor our commitment for already contracted shows in progress and creators who are involved with those shows should expect to hear from us directly in the coming days."

DIRECTV SAYING GOODBYE TO OAN

DirecTV does not plan on renewing its carriage deal with **One America News Network**. *Bloomberg* was first to report the news. The news network will continue to find a home on DirecTV's programming lineup until the expiration of their current agreement, which is expected to come in April. Losing DirecTV will mean a substantial blow to the network's viewership base, but it will remain available on **Verizon Fios** as well as on digital platforms like **Amazon Fire TV** and **Roku**. The provider's decision drew ire from at least one conservative lawmaker. Sen *Rand Paul* (R-KY) tweeted Monday that he canceled his DirecTV service after hearing about the decision



to drop One America News. "Why give money to people who hate us?" he tweeted.

EL REY MAKES STREAMING RETURN

EI Rey Network has launched on ad-supported streamer **Xumo** as both a FAST and VOD channel. The news comes just over a year after EI Rey shuttered its linear network and five months after it teamed up with **Cinedigm** and **FactoryMade Ventures** to create an ad-supported English-language channel. As part of that deal, Cinedigm is working with El Rey to partner with advertisers on custom content. Viewers of the free channel will find content that used to call the linear network home, including "The Director's Chair" and "Lucha Underground."

AT THE FCC

You have until Feb. 27 to get those comments in at the FCC on closed captioning rules for MVPDs and various video devices. Reply comments are due March 4. The FCC Media Bureau is looking to refresh the record on closed captioning, which is nearly six years old. Since then, the agency has received consumer complaints regarding user interfaces and the difficulty of adjusting closed captioning settings, particularly given the increasingly fragmented video programming environment. -The FCC, in partnership with Labor Secretary Martin Walsh, announced the members for the Telecommunications Interagency Working Group. The interagency working group's formation is required under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to develop recommendations to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry. A report is due to Congress by Jan. 14, 2023. Members include Wireless Infrastructure Association EVP Tim House and CWA President Christopher Shelton.

Altice USA TRUSTS AMPERSAND FOR ADDRESSABLE Altice USA agreed to a partnership with Ampersand to make the latter the exclusive seller of Altice's national addressable inventory. Ampersand will also integrate aggregated set top box data insights from two million altice households into its AND platform for local and national addressable TV planning, buying and measurement. The AND platform promises marketers reach across 80 million households, 52 million of which are addressable.

FIBER EXPANSION

Ohio provider **NKTelco** will expand its FTTH system in Versailles, Ohio. The new network will pass more than 1500 homes and several major medical and manufacturing companies, making Versailles a multi-gig broadband community. Planning for the project was completed in 2021 and construction will begin immediately and is expected to be completed in mid-2023.

DISH TAPS WCI FOR 5G MARKETING

DISH's wireless division is teaming up with **WCI Technologies** to market 5G services to enterprises. WCI will sell, market and deliver systems integration services to enterprise customers, and DISH will offer up access to its portfolio of licensed spectrum, RF design capabilities and 5G deployment strategies.

The partnership will initially see WCI focus on private wireless solutions, but will expand following DISH's launch of its 5G network to include support for handsets and data devices. WCI and DISH have worked together for more than 25 years, with the former offering sales and marketing services tied to the hospitality sector.

DOING GOOD

NBCU Academy, a journalism training and development program, has expanded its reach to 30 schools through 13 new academic partnerships. The new partnerships will see the academy's curriculum expand beyond the traditional journalism repertoire by introducing STEM, business, engineering and sports programs. The new academic partners include Arizona State University, Howard University and the University of Florida. NBCU Academy will invest \$2 million in grants to support the new partner institutions and support online experiences and pipeline programs associated with the Academy. NBCU developed an embed program linked to the program, hiring six recent grads from five of its partner schools to work full time in NBC News Digital's diversity verticals, such as NBC Asian America and NBC Latino.

PROGRAMMING

The "53rd NAACP Image Awards" winners will be revealed during the live TV special on Feb. 26 at 8pm ET on **BET**. **Netflix** leads nominations across film and television categories, but **HBO**'s "Insecure" has notched the most noms for a single show. – **Turner Sports** is premiering a docuseries titled "The Game Plan with Shaquille O'Neal" available on Feb. 17 at 7pm ET. O'Neal, a four-time NBA champion and sports analyst, will mentor entrepreneurs throughout the docuseries. – **MTV Entertainment Studios** and **Smithsonian Channel** are kicking off Black History Month with docuseries "One Thousand Years of Slavery – The Untold Story." The show will air on Feb. 7 at 8pm. – **WNET Group** is producing a documentary entitled "One Day In March (wt)," which will chronicle the escalation of hate and violence against AAPI people. It will premiere on **PBS** in May.

PEOPLE

Brian Rikuda is joining BET to serve as EVP, Enterprise Growth Strategy, Business Operations and Programming Strategy. He'll report to BET President/CEO Scott Mills and oversee BET's Enterprise and Business Group as well as its Scheduling, Acquisitions and Research teams. Rikuda joins from McKinsey & Company where he held the role of Associate Partner. - CBS **News** is bolstering its streaming capabilities, naming Anthony Galloway as SVP, CBS News Streaming. Kaci Sokoloff has been upped to VP, Bookings for CBS News Network and Streaming while David Reiter will come onboard as Executive Producer of CBS News special events across Network and Streaming. Galloway previously held senior positions at Condé Nast and Vice Media, and Reiter spent more than 20 years at ABC News. -- Comcast appointed Matt Quantz as VP, Sales & Marketing in Washington. He most recently served as VP, Sales & Marketing in Oregon and Southwest Washington.