

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) reinstating 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.

"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."

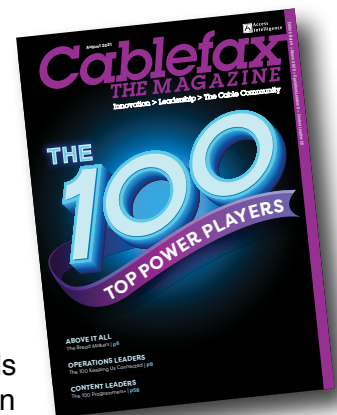
In its petition, RWA said the FCC should reconsider its decision not to prioritize ETCs, arguing that Congress didn't actually require the agency to make the shift and that it's instead reinterpreting the rules. RWA and **NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association** warn that forcing ETCs to incur additional, 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.

It's free to enter — but you must submit your entries by January 21!



Nominate at www.Cablefax100.com | Questions: Mary-Lou French at mfrench@accessintel.com

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

EL REY MAKES STREAMING RETURN

El Rey Network has launched on ad-supported streamer **Xumo** as both a FAST and VOD channel. The news comes just over a year after El 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.