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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

It Takes Two: NTIA Wants States, Feds to Cooperate For BEAD

With states and broadband providers anxiously awaiting the particulars of **NTIA's** Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, “fiber is the new toilet paper,” **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** CEO *Shirley Bloomfield* joked at the start of the association’s **Legislative and Policy Conference** in D.C. Monday. It’s an apt comparison to those early pandemic days where many had to wait their turn on essential products.

Those in unserved communities are hoping government funding will speed up broadband deployment. While states will receive pieces of the \$42 billion BEAD pie, the intricacies lie where each state stands in their current broadband situations.

“We’re trying very hard to make sure we’re not going to be writing any checks without some oversight,” NTIA head *Alan Davidson* said. “But we want to make sure that oversight is not too aggressive ... This is the infrastructure that our country needs [for] connections to the digital economy, filling the divide.”

NTIA will have a go-to representative for each state who’ll receive feedback from communities and identify critical areas of need. The agency is also growing its own staff to help with the overall process. Davidson spoke at the summit about the need for a streamlined procedure for those receiving grants. The FCC’s revamped broadband maps expected to release this fall will help and coordination among the Commission’s USF

programs will make life easier at the state and federal levels.

When it comes to broadband adoption, Davidson emphasized the need for not just providing access and equipment to rural communities, but rather making sure the population has full knowledge of the technology they’re using and how they can participate in a growing digital economy. Congress set aside \$2.75 billion for Digital Equity Act programs as part of the bipartisan infrastructure bill. That funding will go towards promoting digital equity and ensuring all communities have access to the same tools and education they need to engage with the digital world. “I look at [the Digital Equity Program] in particular, it’s going to give states and communities a lot of resources to promote adoption and particularly promote adoption by communities that have been left behind,” Davidson said.

FCC Commissioner *Nathan Simington* joined Davidson and Bloomfield on stage for Monday’s general session. The Republican declared that the USF funding mechanism is in bad shape at the moment and expressed urgency for conversations about potential solutions. This will help with the eventual overlapping of funding from programs, which could cause issues down the road. The other aspect—pricing affordable broadband—is something Simington wants to see a comprehensive rebuild for to move toward more sustainable programs.

But just as the world wondered what will happen next in the early stages of the pandemic, the same goes for states wondering what the future holds for nationwide broadband access. Supply chain issues are only adding to the hurdles, but the



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FREE TO ENTER!

NTIA is looking for ways to minimize its effects. However, when Bloomfield asked attendants if they were told it'd take over a year to receive fiber, a majority of hands went up, showing the breadth of those who will have to play the waiting game.

"We know that this is an all-hands-on-deck moment," Davidson said. "If we're really going to connect everyone in America, it's going to take the work of thousands of folks and the federal government working together with state and local communities."

TWITTER ACCEPTS MUSK'S \$44 BILLION BID

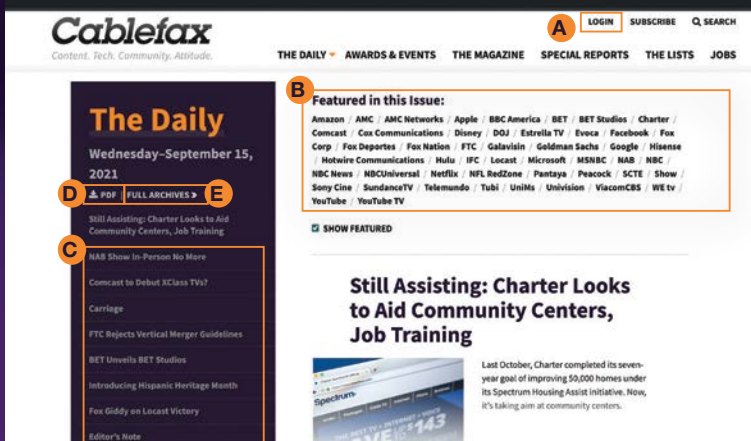
Elon Musk's empire is expanding. His approximately \$44 billion bid to acquire **Twitter** has been accepted by the company's board Monday. Upon completion of the deal, Twitter will become a privately held company. Twitter stockholders will receive \$54.20 in cash for each share of Twitter common stock they own upon closing of the transaction. As for the financing, Musk secured \$25.5 billion in fully committed debt and margin loan financing and will be providing an approximately \$21 billion equity commitment. It is expected to close before the end of the year. Twitter will still disclose its 1Q22 results on April 28, but will not hold a corresponding conference call. "Free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated," Musk said in a statement. "I also want to make Twitter better than ever by enhancing the product with new features, making the algorithms open source to increase trust, defeating the spam bots and authenticating all humans." Laying out the potential impacts of the acquisition would take far more characters to

spell out than a single tweet. Congress has been brainstorming various ideas for how to best regulate Big Tech for years and Section 230 has been a top topic of discussion. Musk's bid for Twitter was celebrated by conservatives and free speech advocates and could cause some Republicans to wait a bit longer before acting on any legislation. "To the extent there is Republican support for a package that would regulate big tech or alter Section 230, it is driven by frustration over their view that Big Tech companies censor conservative speech," **New Street Research** said in a weekend note. "If Musk's bid is successful, Republicans may prefer to see if Musk brings a market solution to their concerns, leading them to hold off on voting to support tech reform before the midterms, or ever."

NAB LIVE IN VEGAS

The **NAB Show** is officially underway, with *Curtis LeGeyt* delivering his first-ever State of the Industry address since becoming President and CEO in January. He kicked things off by congratulating broadcasters for serving as a lifeline during a challenging two years. "And here's the part that impresses me most: you did it in a way that binds our communities together rather than divides them. In the most difficult of circumstances, you were the antidote to social media disinformation and cable news politicization, and I have never been more proud to represent this industry," LeGeyt said. He also dismissed the multiple prognostications of broadcast's death over the years, be it from cable, the DVR, social media, podcasting, streaming and so forth. "Every single time, real-life events actually brought local broadcasters back to the forefront and demonstrated there is no other medium that can connect and inform the

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way we do,” he said, adding that broadcasters have a toolbox of next-gen technologies, including ATSC 3.0, 5G, streaming and mobile video. LeGeyt’s wish list for Capitol Hill includes continuing to push the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, which would let news outlets negotiate with social media on the terms their content could be distributed under. NAB also wants to see a modernization of media ownership rules to account for the competition Big Tech brings and for the FCC to paint broadcast with a broader public policy brush. This week’s NAB Show in Vegas marks the first-time the gathering has been held in person since 2019.

CWA DROPS THOUSANDS ON SOHN ADS

The **Communications Workers of America** are standing behind *Gigi Sohn*, kicking off a six-figure digital advertising campaign Monday supporting her nomination for the fifth commissioner seat at the **FCC**. The ads will run on Facebook and on news websites across Arizona, West Virginia and Nevada, the homes of three key swing voters: Sens *Mark Kelly* (D-AZ), *Joe Manchin* (D-WV) and *Catherin Cortez Masto* (D-NV). “Gigi Sohn has long been a strong advocate on behalf of consumer broadband access, a supporter of workers in the telecommunications and technology industries and a proponent for an open, free and fair internet,” CWA Senior Director, Government Affairs and Policy *Shane Larson* said. “The delay in her confirmation makes it harder for the FCC to serve the American people, which is how the corporations that the agency is meant to regulate like it.”

EVOCA HEADED TO MICHIGAN

ATSC 3.0-powered MVPD service **Evoca** will launch in Traverse City, Michigan, next month with a retail price of \$25/month plus receiver. In partnership with **Heritage Broadcasting**, area residents will also have access to the regional sports network **Michigan Sports Now Plus**, which features high school and college teams. Evoca is also available in Boise and Twin Falls, Idaho; Phoenix; and Denver and Colorado Springs.

IMON OWNED BY GOLDMAN SACHS

Goldman Sachs Asset Management completed its previously announced acquisition of Cedar Rapids-based **ImOn Communications**. The transaction should help speed ImOn’s growth in Eastern Iowa, including Dubuque. ImOn was advised by **Bank Street Group**, **Shuttleworth & Ingersoll**, and **Morgan Lewis & Bockius**. Goldman Sachs Asset Management was advised by **TD Securities** and **Simpson Thacher & Bartlett**. TD Securities also served as Lead Arranger on the debt financing for the transaction.

CRUNCHYROLL GROWING WITH GOOGLE

Anime-focused streamer **Crunchyroll** and **Google** struck a partnership to support its global expansion. With Google as a strategic technology partner, Crunchyroll will be able to achieve distribution of its content and subscription services across Android, Google TV and other Android TV OS devices. The streamer will also utilize Google Cloud to enhance content personalization

FRONTIER LIVENS UP ITS LOGO

Frontier Communications unveiled a new look Monday in an effort to create a perception of a company that is more modern, relevant and tech-oriented. The makeover includes everything from a new logo to a revised color palette and will roll out across various Frontier assets over the coming months. The logo, which includes staggered line work and a roundel shape, is designed to represent an inclusive connected nation and the company’s work to make its customers part of a Gigabit America.

CARRIAGE

Three-year-old network **CLEO TV** was added to fuboTV’s \$70/month “Pro” package. CLEO, a sibling of **TV One**, is geared toward Millennial and Gen X Black women with a reach of 34.9 million.

FREEWHEEL’S YOUTUBE APPROACH

FreeWheel is introducing this month a new set of enhanced ad serving offerings on **YouTube** and **YouTube TV**, including improved segmenting capabilities to reach audiences with ads they might have an interest and frequency capping to optimize and limit the number of times viewers are exposed to the same ad.

RATINGS

Season 3 of **HGTV**’s “Celebrity IOU” is off to a good start with the April 18 ep scoring a .76 L+3 rating with 25-54s and a 1.00 live plus three-day rating among W25-54. That translates to a 49% YOY increase for 25-54s and a 75% increase for W25-54. New eps air Mondays.

PEOPLE

Crown Media Family Networks upped *Sabrina Wiewel* to COO. She has served as EVP/Chief Administrative Officer since 2019 and will now be responsible for the company’s corporate strategy, business development and non-cable business units. She previously served in executive leadership roles at **H&R Block**. – *Jen Caserta*, who exited **AMC Networks** earlier this year after nearly 20 years, has joined **SoundCloud** as Head of People. – **Hogan Lovells** named *David Fritz* as Senior Director in the last firm’s Communications, Internet, and Media practice. He has 27 years of telecom experience and will provide regulatory assistance on engineering and other technical matters for clients in the telecommunications, wireless, and media industries. Fritz was most recently a Senior Consulting Engineer with **Nokia**. – CTV ad firm **BrightLine** is bringing *Michael Bologna* on board as Chief Accelerator, tasked with maximizing the impact the company has on networks, agencies and the OTT ecosystem. Embedded with major media clients such as **Disney**, **NBCU**, and **Fox**, BrightLine delivers connected TV ad experiences for 72 of the top 100 US advertisers. – **Redbox** CFO *Kavita Suthar* will step down on May 16 to spend more time with family. *Mitchell Cohen*, who has served as COO and CFO at a variety of public and private companies, will act as interim CFO. Suthar joined the company in 2015 and played a key role in Redbox’s SPAC merger and public listing in 2021. She’ll remain involved with the company in an advisory capacity through a transitional period.