

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Retrans Roll Call: Plenty of Deals Going Down to the Wire

It looks like 2022 is going out with a retrans bang. There are a number of ongoing retransmission blackouts already underway and plenty of negotiations for renewals that are still taking place.

Right now, all eyes are on the largest cable operator in the U.S. and largest broadcast station owner. **Comcast** and **Nexstar** look to be facing an initial deadline of this weekend—though an extension is always possible (as is a deal). Comcast has filed a [complaint](#) at the **FCC** claiming Nexstar isn't acting in good faith in negotiations. This long-running dispute also involves Nexstar sidecar partner **Mission Broadcasting** and NYC **CW** affiliate **WPIX**, which has been dark on Comcast since Dec. 3. If Nexstar and Comcast don't reach a renewal, the operator could lose 90 broadcast stations, including in Denver, Portland, Indianapolis and Tampa-St. Petersburg.

As is usually the case this time of year, there are plenty of other deals to get done before Dec. 31. **Cox Communications** is currently in the midst of negotiations with **Gray TV** for a renewal that includes the Hartford, CT, CBS affiliate and Omaha, NE, NBC station. **Charter** is thought to be up soon with Nexstar, notable because it lost **Tribune** stations now owned by Nexstar for 9 days at the start of 2019. **Verizon Fios** customers lost Nexstar station in 10 markets for 14 days earlier this year, and DirecTV customers have been without **Mission Broadcasting** and **White Knight Broadcasting** since Oct. 14 and Oct 7, respectively, with both station groups

having management arrangements with Nexstar.

Cox Media and Verizon avoided a blackout with a last-minute deal Thursday. The broadcaster wasn't as successful with **DISH**. Its stations have been off the satellite provider's lineup in nine markets since Nov. 28. The dispute caught the attention of **The NewsGuild-CWA** and **National Alliance of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians-CWA**, which have challenged **Standard General's** takeover of **TEGNA** in part because of Cox Media-owner **Apollo Global Management's** involvement.

On Friday, Standard General sent a letter to the FCC saying it would voluntarily and irrevocably waive enforcement of any term or condition of a retrans consent agreement that would result in a retrans consent agreement between Cox Media Group and any MVPD applying to any current TEGNA station that would be controlled by Standard General following the deal's close. "Our proposed acquisition of TEGNA has been the subject of regulatory review that continues into the phase where the purchase price is increasing every day. The regulatory authorities have expressed concerns to us that our transaction could result in negative impacts on cable and satellite TV consumers in an environment where the government has a heightened focus on inflation," Standard General said in a press release announcing the move.

Last week, NewGuild, et al cited a report in which DISH said Cox Media has delayed meaningful deal talk because it wants stations currently owned by Standard General and TEGNA to be included. Cox Media sent a letter demanding DISH stop making



JOIN US ON WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY
- SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17TH -

Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, our mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as almost 3,600 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad.

Join us by sponsoring a veterans' wreath at a cemetery near you, volunteering or donating to a local sponsorship group.

Visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org

“false and misleading” claims, but the petitioners told the FCC the statement doesn’t specify which statements it considers false or misleading. “Consequently, CMG’s vaguely worded statement, even if true, leaves room for CMG and Standard General to engage in coordinated pricing behavior,” they said.

Cox Media fired back this week, telling the FCC it categorically denies all of the statements regarding the dispute in the NewsGuild letter. “Specifically, CMG denies that it ever sought or attempted to delay retransmission consent negotiations for any reason. Moreover, CMG has not sought and will never seek to negotiate retransmission consent for another company’s stations,” the broadcaster said.

New Street Research analyst *Blair Levin* views the NewsGuild filing as a sign that an FCC decision on the merger is not imminent. “Whatever the merits of the argument, the letter suggests to us that the Union and the company still have not started serious negotiations designed to resolve the matter through conditions and that the FCC leadership has not yet informed the parties that it would like to see the parties’ proposals for how to do so,” he wrote in a research note this week.

Standard General and TEGNA have launched a full-court press to push for the deal’s approval at the FCC. The transaction has been under review for 239 days and counting. In recent weeks, **Rainbow PUSH Coalition**, **the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts** and others have submitted letters in support of the transaction.

SCRIPPS DOUBLING DOWN ON SPORTS.

Scripps is launching a new sports division focused on strengthening its partnerships with sports leagues, conferences and

teams at the local market and national broadcast level. *Brian Lawlor*, the company’s Local Media head since 2009, will become president of the new unit. He’ll continue to lead the local media division for the time being until the broadcaster determines the next steps for company leadership. “Sports is one of the most important content genres in television, with its consistently large and dedicated audiences. But the sports viewing marketplace has become extremely fragmented,” Lawlor said in a statement. “Between our vast number of local stations and **ION**, a national network that can be customized in many markets, we believe Scripps is positioned to widely showcase leagues and players that are currently limited by aging distribution deals.” Lawlor serves on the board of **Misfits Gaming**, an esports company with professional teams in the “League of Legends,” “Overwatch” and “Call of Duty” leagues. He’s also an **NAB** board member and former President/Chair of the **NBC Affiliates Board**.

OPTIMUM MOBILE IS ACP ELIGIBLE

Altice USA’s Optimum is allowing households enrolled in the **FCC’s** Affordable Connectivity Program to receive free or reduced-cost wireless service through **Optimum Mobile** after applying the program’s \$30 credit. Qualifying customers can sign up for free 1 gigabit and 3 gigabit Optimum Mobile or apply the credit to Optimum Internet for free 300 Mbps service. Additionally, households on Tribal lands are eligible for a \$75 credit that provides free service on every Optimum Mobile plan.

RATINGS

TLC is wrapping 2022 as cable’s highest-rated network without sports in primetime among W25-54, W18-49 and W18-34. This marks the third year in a row the network has emerged on top with



Cablefax
MOST POWERFUL
WOMEN

Congratulations to
all the 2022 Honorees!



Enjoy the digital issue, read expanded Q&As with our honorees, and order personalized awards at www.CablefaxWomen.com

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

those demographics. TLC has three of the top five unscripted programs in entertainment cable in key demos for adults and women with “90 Day Fiance: Before the 90 Days,” “Sister Wives” and “90 Day Fiance.” It also has two of the top five unscripted freshman primetime series with A18-34 and W18-34 with “I Am Shauna Rae” and “Loren & Alexei: After the 90 Days.”

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC** is ready to authorize funding support for another 1,764 winning RDOF bids. **Resound Networks** won the majority of those being awarded in this round after the Commission found good cause to waive the deadline for certain applicants to obtain eligible telecommunications carriers designations within the states for which they had submitted bids. Resound Networks filed an ETC designation application with the **Oklahoma Corporation Commission** in January 2021, within 30 days of the public notice announcing it was a winning bidder. Delays in the process prevented it from establishing its ETC status by the Commission’s June 2021 deadline, but its healthy participation in the process and submission of supporting documentation demonstrated to the Commission that it acted in good faith to obtain designation in a timely manner.

NTIA OKS CMC PILOT DOLLARS

NTIA awarded five grants totaling more than \$18.5 million Friday as part of its Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. The awards will expand internet access at California State University, Dominguez Hills; California State University, Fresno; Lincoln University of Missouri; the University of West Alabama; and Southern University and A&M College. Dollars will be directed to the creation of community technology hubs, upgraded classroom technology and growing digital literacy skills at the schools.

PEOPLE

Russell Schneider is joining **Cinedigm** as SVP, Brand Partnerships. The newly-created role will see him build a go-to-market sales strategy, pitch new clients and build a network of agency contacts. He most recently served as VP, Head of Brand Partnerships at **Malka Media/Showtime Sports**.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Twitter Hits

NCTA - The Internet & Television Association @NCTATV

2022 was an important year for broadband, and for cable TV as well.

Let's look at it by the numbers: bit.ly/3uRw9ic

- 15 M+** People helped by Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). ACP gives eligible households a monthly credit toward broadband service. This credit, combined with federal broadband subsidies, allows providers to offer low-cost or no-cost broadband to low-income households.
- 5.3%** Decrease in the retail price of broadband. Despite heavy usage, the retail price (including all taxes and fees) for 100 Mbps service fell 5.3% from last year.
- 38** Emmy wins for HBO. At the 74th Primetime Emmy Awards, HBO's "The White Lotus" came out on top with 10 awards. Sean Schemmel also won for Best Guest Actor in a Comedy Series for HBO's "Veep" for the second year in a row.
- 14 yrs** Of "Barbarian Cut" and "Swimming Bear". Both AMC shows demonstrate the success of character-driven dramas and the continued rise of genre storytelling on TV. "Barbarian Cut" and "Swimming Bear" exceeded all expectations in their respective genres.

Game Show Network @GameShowNetwork

Tomorrow is the season finale of America Says. Thanks for all the fun, games, and moments like this. Watch the finale with us tomorrow at 7:30p on Twitter using the hashtag #AmericaSaysFinale.



626 views 0:01 / 0:26

WeAreDIRECTV @WeAreDIRECTV

'Tis the season for giving, and @DIRECTV manager & veteran Michael Crane and his #TeamDIRECTV colleagues are doing just that by collecting gifts for @ToysForTots_USA.

Thanks for spreading holiday cheer and making this season a little brighter for others. ❄️🎄🌲

#WeAreDIRECTV



Research

(Source: [Xfinity Cyber Health Report 2022](#))

- Xfinity xFi homes average 15 connected devices, up 25% from 2020. Power users average 34 devices, and 58% of consumers plan to buy at least one connected device this holiday season.
- 74% of Americans believe less than 10 attacks hit their home network monthly while 61% believe devices are protected from threats out of the box.
- Only 20% of those surveyed said they would know immediately if they were a victim of a cyberattack. Nearly one-third aren't sure they'd ever know if they were a victim of a cyberattack.

Up Ahead

- JANUARY 5-8:** [CES 2023](#), Las Vegas
- JANUARY 24-26:** [Content Americas](#), Miami
- FEBRUARY 7:** [Regional Fiber Connect](#); Raleigh, NC
- FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 3:** [ACA Connects Summit](#); DC

Quotable

“We sorely need a full FCC. They have a big job. Consider the new maps, broadband consumer labels, ACP, ECF and many other responsibilities. They cannot do this without Gigi Sohn representing the digital equity community. I urge the Senate to confirm her nomination before the holiday recess... Internet access and the skills to use that are not only essential to survive, but to thrive—and thriving is essential to America’s promise to the wellbeing of its people and the country’s ability to compete globally.”

– **USTelecom President/CEO Jonathan Spalter at a Senate Communications Subcommittee hearing on the nation’s broadband needs**