

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Firewall: House Investigates Network Security Challenges

Keeping networks secure is no easy task in 2024, and the **House Communications Subcommittee** came together for a hearing Thursday to identify what holes still need patching in the nation's hardware, software and beyond.

The **FCC's** rip-and-replace program was mentioned multiple times throughout the hearing as both witnesses and House representatives called for the program to receive the full funding it needs to ensure that all **Huawei** and **ZTE** equipment is removed from America's communications networks. But the overwhelming message from the witnesses was that if the government doesn't continue to monitor vendors that may be untrustworthy and prohibit them from being purchased with funding from government programs, we will run into another expensive rip-and-replace problem in a number of years.

"As evidenced by what we're dealing with with rip-and-replace, it's important that the national security agencies engage upfront and, to the extent that is possible, transparently in a clear process that industry can predict and adapt to so that we're not in a rip-and-replace situation anymore," *Clete Johnson*, Senior Fellow at the **Center for Strategic & International Studies**, said. "We need to stay ahead of the threat, identify and remove these untrusted vendors."

He also said the subcommittee should continue to do what it can to maximize the number of trusted suppliers that call the U.S. home. He gave a shout out to the **NTIA's** Wireless

Innovation Fund for being a great tool for accelerating the development of open and interoperable equipment

"We have a big market that is hungry for trusted equipment, and we just need to leverage that strength through public investments, but also through private collaboration aimed at free market competition," he said.

Vulnerable equipment opens the door for everything from espionage to ransomware attacks. Cybersecurity insurance is available these days to be used in the event of an attack to recoup damages and pay off hackers in order to re-secure vulnerable data. That can be a good option for operations of all sizes, but small businesses or local governments with limited resources shouldn't think of it as a replacement that provides the same level of protection as a trained cybersecurity professional.

"Insurance has become something where it's been good and bad. It's good in that in order to get insurance, you have to say we're doing the following things, but because of the fact that you've purchased insurance, it's probably a matter of public record," **Fortinet** Head, Cyber Policy *Jim Richberg* said. "We have seen ransomware groups preferentially target these vulnerable jurisdictions for the easy payout and saying yes, this is a jurisdiction of 10,000 people, but they have insurance coverage up to this amount."

Just as there is a focus on workforce development for broadband providers gearing up for major buildouts in the coming years, so too is there one in the cybersecurity industry. Richberg believes veterans or those transitioning out of the military



American Agenda Hosts
Bob Brooks & Katrina Szish

2023

A YEAR OF SUCCESS

NEWSMAX

Click Here

could be great prospects for those jobs, with some studies showing that roughly 40% of U.S. companies that are looking for cyber talent would preferentially like to hire veterans.

AI, which is sure to be one of the big topics on Capitol Hill throughout 2024, also came up, and Richberg said putting the technology to use isn't a novel concept in the cybersecurity community. It's been used in some way or another for more than a dozen years, he said.

"It has the ability to allow us to characterize what normal activity is, to see what's abnormal, and as someone who ran offensive operations in the U.S. government, you try and fail many times before you succeed," Richberg said. "This allows you to see them, try to figure out what they're doing, blocking a point of attack and inoculating everyone globally against that threat. So this is something that has been a quiet revolution for the cybersecurity industry."

At **CES**, U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Tech *Anne Neuberger* also touched on the topic of artificial intelligence for cybersecurity during the conference's "Conversations with U.S. Government Leaders" panel. With the breadth of data that the intelligence community is trying to make sense of quickly, whether those are indications or warnings about imminent attacks, AI can offer helpful tools to break it down quickly and track patterns. That data can also be pulled quickly and incorporated into briefings for policymakers in a timely manner. At the same time, there's the potential for AI to be used against the U.S. or organizations through its ability to understand patterns in the way intelligence operations are conducted.

She said countries are working together to ensure that labeling programs for cyber-secure products are aligned internationally, and announced that the U.S. has signed an agreement with the E.U. to create a joint roadmap for consumer labeling programs like the U.S. Cyber Trust Mark program. "What we're doing essentially is we've agreed to partner from the beginning because we want companies to know when they test their products once to meet the cybersecurity standards. They can sell anywhere—in Paris, Texas, or Paris, France," she said.

FCC OUTLINES ACP SHUTDOWN

The **FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau** released an order Thursday detailing how it will gradually shut down the Affordable Connectivity Program should Congress fail to grant it additional funding. The Bureau will announce the upcoming end of the ACP approximately 60 days prior to the end of the last fully-funded month of the program, which is expected to occur in late February. The Bureau will freeze new enrollments on Feb. 8, a move it believes will help it to more accurately project the time at which funding will be exhausted. **USAC**

will be responsible for implementing the freezes. But participating broadband providers will need to send out notices to customers long before that warning about the program's potential shutdown. The first required notice must be sent no later than 14 days after the release of Thursday's order and should generally advise ACP households about the possibility of the program's termination and the potential impact on their service and bills. After the FCC issues its 60-day shutdown notice, providers will send a second and third required notice. Those notices must be sent in writing to ACP households, and providers are being strongly encouraged to include information on their other lower-cost offerings. ACP households will need to opt-in in order to continue receiving broadband service after the end of the ACP. The Bureau is aware of concerns from providers that stem from the possibility that ACP funding will only cover some of the subsidy costs in the final month of the program, and it will provide further guidance to providers on that issue when it releases its 60-day notice of the program's shutdown. Any provider that chooses to forgo receiving partial reimbursement for the program's final month will not be required to pass through any subsidy benefits to ACP households after the last fully funded month. The Bureau will also pause certain activities tied to advertising, awareness and outreach. Entities that received grant funding from the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant and the ACP Pilot Programs will be allowed to continue to use their grant funds for outreach until enrollments close.

LAYOFFS HIT HALLMARK MEDIA LEADERSHIP

It's a gloomy start to 2024 for **Hallmark Media**. The company underwent layoffs Wednesday as it shifts to "a new, more streamlined structure." Four executives were part of the layoffs: CMO *Lara Richardson*, Chief People Officer *Pamela Wolfe*, EVP Research Strategy *Robin Thomas* and Head of Distribution *Judi Lopez*. "Hallmark Media organizational changes were announced internally [Wednesday] representing a new, more streamlined structure. As such, some executive leadership roles were eliminated, while new and expanded roles were created in order to forge new opportunities that will strengthen our focus on our core, and build new capabilities for our consumers and viewers," the company said in a statement provided to **CFX**. "The Hallmark Media business remains committed to creating compelling content and Hallmark Channel recently closed out the entire 2023 year as the #1 most-viewed cable entertainment network among key demos, demonstrating a clear pathway for continued success." It's unclear who will enter or take on those new and expanded roles.



How I got HERE

SHANE
West
COO
TDS TELECOM



"During my first job out of college, I realized I wanted a career that was more engaging and fast-paced. Then I joined the wireless industry during its infancy when everything was growing. You could make decisions one day and see the results the next. That role worked well and allowed me to easily move to TDS, which was entering competitive markets for the first time," says West. "It felt like we were in the stock market, getting hourly sales reports. Then, TDS expanded more into the cable business, and now fiber broadband network development and expansion. I feel fortunate to have been able to ride the top of a growth wave throughout my career; I find it energizing."

West's promotion to COO was first announced in August as TDS picked him to succeed Mark Barber, who decided to retire upon the turn of the year. With the transition officially complete, it's another chapter in West's 27-year career with the organization (24 with TDS), having been in two senior-level leadership positions in the past seven years.



When he reflects on his professional career, one lesson that sticks out is to give the customer what they want. "There's a hunting phrase that fits here: shoot ahead of the duck—meaning stay ahead of the curve or anticipate what's coming up next. I have found our industry is successful when it shoots ahead of the duck," he says.

At TDS, getting ahead meant launching Gig services in cable on a DOCSIS network then later deploying fiber networks before peers thought it was financially feasible. West says it's the dynamic team at TDS that gives inspiration day after day. "These associates are the ones who are hungry to learn and get the job done. I thrive on being around people who care as much about the business as I do."

DISNEY TECH AND DATA SHOWCASE HITS VEGAS

The festivities at **CES 2024** turned into **Disney** flexing its advertising muscles at its annual Tech and Data showcase Wednesday. It embraced the theme of being dynamic, something that the company will show on March 24 once it fully combines **Disney+** and **Hulu**. **Rita Ferro**, President, Disney Advertising, played up the opportunities that come with fusing the two's respective libraries together both from a content and advertising standpoint. "Our tech stack was intentionally built for streaming to work seamlessly across the global marketplace. It was made for you to buy

once and deliver everywhere," Ferro said. "We're not renting or borrowing our technology, no one else's technology, we own it." Ferro ended her opening monologue by unveiling the ability for advertisers to buy across Hulu and Disney+ in a single campaign. It was the first in a slew of announcements from the House of Mouse, which included the launch of a beta program for its first native streaming shoppable ad format. Called Gateway Shop, viewers will get personalized prompts for products that are sent to their phone via push notification or email. "This next evolution will use our Gateway technology to tap into something we all know to be true: viewers are watching TV with a second screen in their hand," **Ajay Arora**, SVP, Product Management and Engineering said. "We've seen boosts up to 5X engagement by leveraging our Gateway capabilities. And we're still early in the game, so there's plenty of opportunity ahead." Disney's cleaning up its clean room technology too, having expanded the roster of cloud services that fuel clean room interoperability to include **Amazon Web Services** and **Google Cloud**. That'll allow it to expand the scale and support for campaigns that use first-party data while also providing choice for clients via open collaboration within the marketplace. On the measurement front, Disney is working with **Lucid** to offer metrics and consideration to marketers in real time. It's also teaming up with **Innovid** to help facilitate outcomes and actions.

DIAMOND-MLB HEARING DELAY

A bankruptcy court hearing centered on ironing out **Diamond Sports'** distribution contracts with the MLB and its teams has been delayed to Jan. 19. That's 10 days after it was initially scheduled for, and signals that there may be some movement toward a new deal. Diamond Sports has already reached deals with the **NBA** and **NHL** that would allow it to continue airing games on its RSNs for the remainder of the 2024 seasons with impacted rights returning to the relevant teams or leagues at season's end.

RATINGS

It was **Donald Trump's** turn for **Fox News'** string of town halls from Iowa, and from 9-10pm Wednesday it was the most-watched program of the night on linear TV with an average of 4.34 million viewers and 553,000 in the A25-54 group. That hour took 53% of the cable news share in total viewers, according to early data from **Nielsen**. The Republican presidential debate on **CNN** at the same 9-10pm time reeled in 2.59 million viewers (478,000 A25-54).

DOING GOOD

Charter's Spectrum Employee Community Grants program turns five this year, and it's celebrating by pledging \$2.5 million in awards to local nonprofits over the next five years. The funding will go to a minimum of 500 employee-nominated nonprofits through 2028. Recipients get donations of up to \$10,000 for offering services to underserved communities such as food pantries, homeless shelters and clothing distribution.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Gypsy Rose Takes the Mic in Lifetime Doc

It would be hard to miss that *Gypsy Rose Blanchard* was released from prison at the end of December after serving seven years of a 10-year sentence for her part in her mother's murder. She's been making the talk show rounds over the past week, reflecting on her childhood, time behind bars and what's ahead. In the middle of the Gypsy whirlwind is **Lifetime's** "The Prison Confessions of Gypsy Rose Blanchard," a six-hour docuseries featuring interviews with a still-incarcerated Blanchard and those who knew her. Many may feel like they are familiar with Blanchard given the TV specials made about her life as a victim of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy who made headlines for her part in her mother's fatal stabbing. There's **Hulu's** dramatization in 2019 series "The Act" and **HBO's** 2017 crime doc, "Mommy Dead and Dearest." But the tell-all delivers several surprises. "So much of what has already been put out there was either by people that honestly just didn't know the ins and outs of my case or my life. And ultimately, I think that I'm the source," Blanchard said during a virtual press conference this week. Her confessions—which cover not only her life with her mother, but also her time in prison—make for gripping TV. The series debuted over the weekend and will re-air on Lifetime Friday from 6pm to 12am and Sunday from 10am to 4pm. EP *Melissa Moore* has documented Blanchard since 2017. Moore, whose father is known as the Happy Face serial killer, said the two share the bond of living through unimaginable trauma. "There were also fictionalized versions of my dad's story, so I can relate to Gypsy feeling like everybody is telling their narrative of something deeply personal about yourself," Moore said. Blanchard wants to use her fame to advocate for mental health and spend time with her husband (yes, she got married in prison). As for Gen Z's obsession with Blanchard (she's racked up more than eight million social media followers), she chalks it up to her delayed start on life. "In many ways, things that I'm doing now, I should have been doing when I was like 16," she said. "I think that the appeal about me is I'm learning about my identity, while Gen Z is learning about theirs too." — *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

"Leave the World Behind," **Netflix**. Last week we teased this new Netflix film, which seems wildly under-buzzed in comparison to its network neighbor, "Maestro." We can't fault *Bradley Cooper* for widening the audience for *Leonard Bernstein*. And *Cooper* and *Carey Mulligan* give strong performances as Bernstein and his talented, tolerant wife, *Felicia Montealegre*, the film suffers from an explicit accounting of Bernstein's importance as an artist. While certain of *Maestro's* production values were excellent, its sound editing, score and visuals are top notch—"Leave the World" is a far simpler film, at least on the surface. Below the surface is where this film excels. As soon as *Mahershala Ali* and *Myha'la Herrold*, clad in formal attire, show up on the doorstep of *Clay (Ethan Hawke)* and *Amanda (Julia Roberts)*, the cultural critique embedded in *Sam Esmail's* film begins. *Herrold* excels in these early scenes, redirecting other characters' prejudices back on them, which is something she did so well in **HBO's** hit series "Industry." *Ali* gives his usual strong performance, nearly eclipsing *Roberts*. Also strong in this cast is *Farrah Mackenzie*, whose facial expressions add much to this film's creepiness. Of course, the wild card is how much input a pair of exec producers named *Michelle* and *Barack* had. Word is it was a lot. Certainly, the politically tinged intrigue seemed flawless. — *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE

P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*

(01/01/24-01/07/24)

MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
ESPN	1.620	5109
FNC	0.515	1625
HGTV	0.292	919
MSNBC	0.274	863
HALL	0.268	844
HIST	0.233	733
DISC	0.211	664
TLC	0.203	639
INSP	0.188	594
TBSC	0.186	588
FOOD	0.173	545
CNN	0.170	537
USA	0.168	530
ID	0.160	505
TNT	0.155	489
LIFE	0.150	472
TVLAND	0.149	470
HMM	0.144	453
GSN	0.124	392
SYFY	0.122	386
A&E	0.120	379
REELZ	0.109	345
BET	0.109	344
ESPN2	0.102	321
OXY	0.100	314
WETV	0.099	312
BRAVO	0.097	305
AMC	0.094	296
PRMNT	0.082	258
FX	0.082	257
NATGEO	0.080	253
NWSMX	0.079	249
FRFM	0.076	240
ADSM	0.073	232
FETV	0.071	224

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.



NOMINATE BEFORE JAN. 16

Nominate the most influential executives in the media, cable & broadband industry for a coveted spot on the Cablefax 100 list.

www.Cablefax100.com