

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Election Day: News Nets Prepare For Tight Races Across the States

News networks are gearing up for the biggest night of their year, and they're each preparing not only for Election Day, but for the days and weeks after as votes are counted and the official calling of presidential and congressional races.

For **NewsNation**, this will be its first election since becoming a 24/7 news network back in June. Cherie Grzech, Co-President of News & Politics, told **CFX** that what viewers will see on Tuesday is not just a show of the power of NewsNation, but the other branches of **Nexstar** as well, including its 199 local stations across the country and The Hill. The last three months have been something of a training period for the big night, but they've been intense amid a campaign season that included President *Joe Biden* pulling out of the race, Vice President *Kamala Harris* taking his spot and an assassination attempt on President *Donald Trump's* life.

“It’s a preparation for the biggest night of our year, which will be election night. Everything we’ve learned up to this point will be utilized on election night. And we’re not only preparing for the days leading up to the election, but we’re certainly preparing for what it may mean after the election and how long it may take to call the election,” she said. “So we have to be prepared for so many things that may or may not happen.”

To amp things up, NewsNation has partnered with **Decision Desk HQ** to provide real-time election results, voting analysis and projections and coverage will begin at 6pm ET on Tuesday. A visual tool called Election Pulse will provide real-time updates on the projected outcome of races, and viewers will see a probability needle move throughout the night based on patterns and remaining uncounted ballots. **The CW Network** will provide a simulcast of NewsNation's election night coverage from 8pm-12am.

NewsNation certainly isn't alone with every other network preparing for their version of the Super Bowl. **C-SPAN's** plans for election night coverage are more comprehensive than ever, including 17 hours of nonstop live TV production (no commercials, of course!). Programming begins at 7pm ET on Tuesday night, with C-SPAN expecting to present at least 20 victory and concession speeches from races across the country. This year, it also struck a partnership with **Charter-owned Spectrum News** for the provision of additional reports with detailed exit poll results and live local coverage from battleground states. **Spectrum News+** election coverage will also be simulcast on **C-SPAN2** throughout the night.

Leading up to Election Day, **Fox News’** “Fox & Friends” will be on the ground with diners throughout Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin to discuss the status of the races in these swing states. Enhancing the network’s coverage of the races this year will be a number of technology enhancements and design changes. Anchor *Bill Hemmer’s* “Bill-board” now has augmented reality tools integrated into its system, allowing him to drill deeper into election night developments across population maps, outstanding vote maps and more. Other new tools include a Path to 270 map and a snapshot into the top five races that are simply too close to call.

CNN viewers and app users will also gain access to new tools for Election Day analysis. Fans of *John King's* "Magic Wall" will now be able to tap into its abilities on their phones and tablets thanks to native iOS and Android apps. It will display live results in every state, including for more than 500 congressional and gubernatorial races.

MSNBC's primetime coverage will begin at 6pm ET with *Rachel Maddow* leading the way. More than 100 NBC News correspondents, reporters and embeds are being dispatched across the U.S. to report from key battleground states, the

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White House and from candidates' headquarters. Over the weekend ahead of the big day, MSNBC is also airing specials highlighting different voter populations. For example, at 12pm ET on Saturday, "The Katie Phang Show" will shine a spotlight on Florida voters and their take on this year's races.

CNBC's coverage will expand beyond what is shown on its network. CNBC.com is hosting an election blog all week with up-to-the-minute results and commentary. Its digital video team will also produce in-depth explainer and analysis videos breaking down the most important news from the election. The videos will be published on CNBC.com, **YouTube** and other social media platforms.

Greta Van Susteren will lead **Newsmax's** election night coverage, starting at 5pm from Newsmax's Washington, D.C., studios. Decision Desk HQ is also a partner of Newsmax, offering up election calls and results in real time. Newsmax's free streaming channel **Newsmax2** will also offer live election coverage starting at 7pm.

Each of the networks know that this isn't just a competition for viewership on Election Day. The hope, especially for some of the more fledgling operations, is to make a strong impression that will encourage viewers to stick around for the other 364 days of the year.

"I think we're a place where people will return to because they'll find that we're not set up to tell anyone what they want to hear. We're set up to tell people what is true and what is accurate about the information that's coming in," Grzech said. "It's our job, and our network is based off of that. I think there's no better arena to show that fairness than on Election Day."

TITLE II BATTLE RESUMES THURSDAY

Tomorrow may be the scariest day of the year. No, not Halloween, but rather oral arguments for ISPs' challenge of the **FCC's** order to restore net neutrality and reclassify broadband internet access service as a telecommunications service under Title II. The date of the hearing certainly hasn't gone unnoticed, with **Free Press** soliciting donations for its "Net Neutrality Rapid-Response Fund" via an email chock-full of Halloween references. "This horror-movie plot is familiar: As soon as the FCC adopts Net Neutrality rules, ISPs sue to overturn them like zombies rising from the dead," it declares. **Electronic Frontier Foundation** fired off a [missive](#) Wednesday proclaiming that the future of the open internet is in danger, "not from ghosts and goblins, but from the broadband companies that control internet access in most of the United States." *Jeffrey Wall* of Sullivan and Cromwell will argue for ISPs tomorrow, sans costume we presume. All of the industry's eyes will be tuned in to the [three-person](#).

[all-GOP judge panel](#) that'll hear the case at the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. **Cablefax** will be on the ground in the Queen City with up-to-date coverage of how the hearing unfolds. Festivities kick off at 8:30am.

FCC COMMISSIONER WARNS OF MISINFORMATION, URGES LOCALITY

On the cusp of the upcoming election and on a night when Democratic Presidential nominee *Kamala Harris* held a rally on the National Mall in D.C., **FCC** Commissioner *Anna Gomez* addressed a room of industry professionals and free speech advocates at the Free Speech America Gala, presented by **The Media Institute**. In her opening remarks, Gomez highlighted the importance of being properly informed in today's media landscape. "I'm thinking a lot about the challenges that Americans are facing in navigating the news media environment and understanding what's happening in their local communities and across the country as they prepare to make important decisions at the ballot box," she said. "We live in a time when news media is at our fingertips. Being a properly informed member of civil society can be an elusive goal." Although the theme of the night centered around the First Amendment and the importance of freedom of the press and speech, Gomez emphasized the concerning trend of disinformation and its influence on society, citing the infamous 1938 broadcast adaptation of H.G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" and comparing it to skepticism fueled by alternative news sources about Hurricane Helene and Milton. "In this case, 'War of the Worlds' had limited listenership and even a smaller subset of people who believed what they heard or what they thought they heard," she warned. "But one could only imagine how far and wide a false story about a foreign threat could travel with the powerful media platforms we have today." As a potential counter to the wave of information surrounding both weather and other events, Gomez highlighted the importance of prioritizing local news to combat misinformation. "As our nation contends with a growing frequency of weather-related disasters, it is imperative that we make preserving local media a priority. Preserving localism in broadcast media has long been one of the FCC's key pillars of media policy."

COMCAST SET FOR WBD CARRIAGE RENEWAL IN 2025

Next year is a big one for **Comcast** as it gets ready to negotiate carriage renewals with **Warner Bros. Discovery**. What **Lightshed Partners** is keeping its eye on is the aspect of WBD losing its piece of the **NBA** rights deal to **Amazon** and **NBCUniversal**, arguing it could signal difficulty in WBD's ability

In The
WILD

A Cablefax feature highlighting industry doings spotted in the real world.

In this election season, there's no shortage of politicians embarking on whistle-stop tours. But if you're looking for something more cozy and less partisan, Hallmark Media delivered this month with its first-ever Jingle Stop Tour to celebrate the 15th anniversary of "Countdown to Christmas."

Hallmark-themed Christmas tour buses lined up near Washington, D.C.'s District Pier on Oct. 16 for the very first stop on the tour to launch the annual programming stunt. More than 500 fans showed up—some as early as 7am—making their way through the entry line, where they were gifted



Getty Images for Hallmark Media

Santa hats, hot cocoa and cookies. A 16-person roster of Hallmark movie stars, including Jonathan Bennett, Tamera Mowry-Housley and Nikki DeLoach—were on hand to interact with the crowd,

sign autographs, take selfies and, of course, sing Christmas songs.

After D.C., the festive red buses made their way to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where the stars made crafts (with Hallmark-owned Crayola products, natch!), handed out gifts and visited with families and patients. Hallmark presented a check for \$15,000 toward the hospital's toy drive initiative, Snowflake Station. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia has a mention in this season's Hallmark film, "Christmas on Call" (premieres Nov. 22).

From there, it was on to New York's Hudson Yards, where there were more fan meet-and-greets, treats and holiday games. There were also plenty of press interviews, scoring Hallmark nice impressions for its holiday hullabaloo.

The next day, the stars celebrated Countdown to Christmas Eve at the iconic Hudson Valley restaurant Blue Hill at Stone Barns. The evening included a special performance by three-time



Getty Images for Hallmark Media

Grammy award-winning superstar duo Dan + Shay, who will have music from their first-ever holiday album featured in Hallmark's new movies this season.

Countdown to Christmas kicked off on Oct. 18 with three original holiday movie premieres: "Twas the Date Before Christmas," "Holiday Crashers" and "Scouting for Christmas." They kept the holiday tradition alive, becoming the top three entertainment programs of the week among households, total viewers, women and persons 18+.

to re-up carriage for all of its networks and either maintain/increase affiliate fees. "The investor narrative we continue to hear is that NBCU intends to help pay for its newly acquired NBA rights by substantially reducing programming spending across Warner Bros. Discovery's networks," the firm said in a note. "Interestingly, we do not believe NBCU factored cost savings at Comcast's cable (video distribution) business into the media rights licensing decision made by NBCU." WBD and Comcast's renewal talks will happen simultaneously with HBO's dealings with **Sky**. Lightshed pointed to how WBD is open to ending Sky Atlantic HBO exclusive distribution and launching **Max** direct-to-consumer in the U.K., Germany and Italy. However, when push comes to shove, Lightshed doesn't anticipate another public carriage spat. "While none of WBD's domestic cable networks are must-haves individually, it is hard to imagine Comcast being willing to remove all of WBD's networks from its video packages, not to mention not being able to offer HBO programming directly," the firm said. "Comcast dropping WBD networks feels like a nuclear option that would dramatically accelerate the demise of the multichannel bundle."

WHEELER ASKS CONGRESS TO KEEP EYE ON PRESIDENTIAL POWER

In a blog post for the **Brookings Institution**, former **FCC** Chair *Tom Wheeler* [took](#) a hard look at *Donald Trump's* calls to challenge or revoke the licenses of broadcasters he doesn't like and whether he would be capable of doing so should he win on Tuesday. Current **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* has [said](#) the agency won't take such action simply because a political candidate disagrees with certain content or coverage, but Wheeler, who was appointed FCC Chair in 2013 by President *Obama*, said a president already has powers beyond instructing the FCC that could hurt broadcasters and internet-based entities. He pointed to Section 706 of the Communications Act of 1934, which allows a president to, if they find it necessary for national security or defense, to suspend or amend the rules and regulations applicable to any or all stations or devices capable of emitting electromagnetic radiations within the U.S. With that in mind, he called for Congress to act as an overseer of those emergency authorities that have been delegated to the president. "Congress constantly holds oversight hearings on the agencies of the executive branch; hearings on the unilateral powers granted to the president are warranted," Wheeler argued. "The threshold question for such hearings should be whether there are sufficient guardrails in place to protect against their abuse, and what such protections should look like. Regardless of who wins the election—Congress should review whether the unilateral powers granted to the president in the 20th century need updating for the 21st century."

OPTIMUM ADDS VIDEO OPTIONS

Optimum is introducing a pair of new video packages for cus-

tomers on Nov. 4 after launching the low-cost Entertainment TV option earlier this year. The new Extra TV plan runs at \$85/month and has over 125 channels including **Bravo**, **Disney**, **ESPN**, **USA** and more. Everything TV will go for \$140/month and include more than 200 channels such as **Starz Encore**, **FX Movie Channel** and **Turner Classic Movies**. Everything TV will also have RSNs **YES Network**, **SNY** and **MSG Network** in eligible areas. For both plans, live and on-demand viewing is accessible through Optimum Stream and other traditional cable boxes.

AT&T INTRODUCES GATEWAY FOR BUSINESS FIBER CUSTOMERS

Continuing down its path toward convergence, **AT&T** is releasing what it claims is an industry-first integration of fiber and 5G networks with a single-box device. Starting early next year, AT&T Business Fiber customers across the U.S. who order speeds of 1 Gbps or higher can get the company's integrated gateway that's designed to combine fiber internet and wireless network availability. In the event of a fiber outage, the gateway will automatically switch to AT&T's 5G network where available before reverting back to fiber when service is restored. Market rollout has already occurred in Arkansas, California, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma and Texas.

COMCAST NOTCHES 'BIGGEST WEEK IN INTERNET HISTORY'

On the heels of the World Series, college and **NFL** football games and the launch of video game "Call of Duty: Black Ops 6," **Comcast** said it recorded its biggest week in internet history last week. The game's early release accounted for 19% of total network traffic, good for the fifth-highest internet traffic event in Comcast's network history. "Thursday Night Football," available exclusively through streaming on **Prime Video**, combined with Call of Duty's full release to take 26% of internet traffic—the second-highest night in traffic behind the **Peacock**-exclusive Wild Card game in January. Comcast noted that the top-five biggest internet traffic events on its network have come within the last 10 months.

SAMSUNG TV+ HITS 88M MARK

Samsung's FAST and AVOD service **Samsung TV Plus** crossed 88 million monthly active users this week. The platform revealed the milestone along with a more than 50% YOY increase in global viewership, adding that the growth is fueled by its U.S. user base of Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X folks who over-indexed in the P18-49 demo. Another area that helped is AVOD, which saw a 400%+ surge YOY. Samsung TV Plus's recent launches in Singapore and the Philippines should help boost viewership, with Thailand set to get the service soon as well.

EVAN SHAPIRO GETS CANDID IN LINKEDIN FEATURE

Media cartographer *Evan Shapiro* pulled the mask off and shed light on his personal experience in the corporate TV world in **LinkedIn's** [latest episode](#) of its "Catalyst" series. In a candid chat, he touched on his rise through **IFC** and **Sundance TV** before joining **NBCUniversal** as its EVP, Digital Enterprises where he founded and launched the comedy-specific streaming platform **SeeSo** and was in charge of content. "But then eventually, the titles, and the paycheck, and the notoriety became the thing I became more attracted to," he recounted. After being let go on his 50th birthday, he discussed what it took for him to bounce back and chart forth on a new journey.

AWARDS

The Media Institute presented three awards at Tuesday night's Free Speech America Gala in D.C. *Floyd Abrams* received the Freedom of Speech Award, celebrating his decades of service in constitutional law. Abrams currently serves as the steering committee chair of the Media Institute's Madison Project. **America's Public Television Stations** President and CEO *Patrick Butler* received the American Horizon Award, acknowledging his leadership of multiple publications, his public service on Capitol Hill and his advocacy for public broadcasting. The Media Institute's Chairman of the Board and former **FCC** Chairman, General Counsel, and Commissioner *Dick Wiley* received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Wiley, who also served as the gala's master of ceremonies, was recognized for his career-long advocacy of greater competition and less regulation in media. – Entries for the 2025 **NAMIC** Vision Awards are now [open for submission](#). The awards contain more than 15 categories, highlighting programming that reflects diverse, multi-ethnic and multicultural audiences served by the entertainment industry. Previous honorees include broadcast networks, syndicators and digital content creators. The deadline to submit is Jan. 29.

PROGRAMMING

The two-hour premiere of "Lady of the Dunes: hunting a Cape Cod Killer" will kick off Nov. 29 at 8pm on **Oxygen**. The series examines the decades-long investigation of the murder of an unknown woman found in Provincetown, Massachusetts. – **Apple TV+** is giving "The Family Plan" a sequel that'll see *Mark Wahlberg* produce and reprise his role alongside *Michelle Monaghan*, *Zoe Colletti* and *Van Crosby*. The Family Plan premiered as the most-watched film on Apple TV+ last year. – Prime Video's new half-hour drama series "On Call" will have its global premiere on Jan. 9, releasing all eight episodes. The police drama follows a rookie and veteran officer duo on patrol in Long Beach, California.

Think about that for a minute...

Intentionally Annoying

Commentary by Steve Effros

I think it's pretty easy to spot an obvious trend these days; advertising placement that seems to be intentionally annoying. Why would anyone do that? As important, why would anyone actually pay to do that? I suppose one answer is the old saw that says "... I don't care what you say about me, so long as you get the name right!" In other words, as we have seen recently with political rhetoric, it doesn't really matter what you say so long as you say it enough times, it will become "imprinted," like it or not. We have to make a concerted effort to object to this nonsense.

No, I'm not going to veer into a political discussion here, although it would be easy to do. I want to focus on what I think everyone has experienced lately, for instance the "pop up" ads that appear in all sorts of different places on your screen when you're trying to read or listen to something on the internet. You've all had the experience. You click on some news article, and the next thing you know an ad shows up at the bottom of the page covering the print. You quickly look around for the little "x" to get rid of the darn thing (I have no idea what the ad is for, and if I did it would be a disincentive to respond favorably!).

But the little "x" isn't where it's supposed to be, at the "top right" location that all other "exit" instructions are. Nope, it's on the bottom, or actually not visible at all, you have to "move" the ad box to be able to then access the ability to get rid of the intentional interruption. Do they really think this is the best way to make me feel warm and fuzzy about the product, project, issue or person suddenly being superimposed on what I'm trying to read or listen to? I don't think so.

This goes right along with what's happening on the "streaming services" that are now befouled by "sponsors." That's the new terminology, apparently, for advertisers. You get to the critical part of what you're watching on YouTube, for instance, and suddenly there is a jarring interruption for some drug, or pickup truck, or a promotion for some other

video! As I've noted before, I suspect a lot of those interruptions are done intentionally to induce folks to become subscribers to a "Premium" service that eliminates the interruptions. It's gotten so ubiquitous that no matter how much I try, I find I have to take the plunge and pay to get decent service. In other words, get rid of the intentional annoyance.

I suppose my own response proves that this methodology works, but it sure doesn't make me feel good, and I automatically cease being a "sticky" subscriber. When I feel it necessary to eliminate the annoyances imposed by a service because it has something I want to see, read or hear, sure, I pay. They have to make money. But I now automatically review all the other services I'm paying for and actively choose to eliminate one. I can guarantee there will be a lot of other folks doing more of the same thing now that the feds, in the form of the FTC and the FCC are adopting rules that make it as easy to unsubscribe as it is to subscribe!

I think the FCC may be going a bit far in suggesting that all services should only essentially be paid for on an "as used" basis. In other words, no monthly or yearly deals, just daily churn. That, in the long run, is likely to hurt consumers even more, but it's where we are headed if the various services insist on using annoyance as a sales tool. Beware.



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



Congratulations 2024 Diversity & Pride List Honorees!

VIEW HONOREES

The Cablefax team is thrilled to announce the honorees for this year's Diversity & Pride List, recognizing the most influential multi-ethnic and LGBTQ+ executives in the industry along with our D&I Champion. New this year, we've interspersed Cablefax's Work Culture Awards to highlight the innovative and attractive work environments alongside the dynamic individuals of our Diversity and Pride Lists. [Visit our site to view the digital issue and read the Q&As from the honorees.](#)