

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Simington Says: News Distortion Raises Issues, Broadcasters Need Reform

Broadcasters appear to have a sympathetic ear in **FCC** Commissioner *Nathan Simington* when it comes to media ownership reform, which he touched on as a priority during an appearance at a **Media Institute** Lunch in D.C. on Thursday. Less clear are his views on the agency's role in news distortion complaints, with one currently pending against **CBS'** "60 Minutes" for its editing of an interview with then-VP *Kamala Harris*.

"Certainly, the FCC has shown no interest in addressing the question for about 30 years. When the Center for American Rights' broadcast news distortion complaint crossed my desk, I was about to throw it away," he said at the Media Institute's monthly luncheon. "I read it a second time and thought, 'Whoa, this is actually sort of well-pleaded as a complaint' in that they correctly didn't complain about the content exactly. They complained about deceptive presentation of a newsworthy event through deliberately misleading."

The FCC has had a policy against news distortion in over-the-air broadcast since 1969, but it's rarely held licensees in violation of the rule. Research from Santa Clara University communications professor *Chad Raphael* found the FCC ruled there was distortion just one time between 1985 and 1999. Simington said the leading news distortion cases he can find from the FCC's past involve things such as local stations staging deceptive accidents involving popular car models at the time and then misreporting the danger and damage as-

sociated with the models.

That's why he's intrigued by the question of whether or not CBS' editorial decisions in presenting an interview could lead to distortion as well as whether broadcast news distortion is a real issue for the FCC today. "I don't get to set the agenda at the Commission. I just get to vote on it. So, in some ways, my opinion doesn't matter totally on this front," he said. "But I guess my assessment is that it's worth knowing whether broadcast news distortion is in fact still part of the public interest standard, and if so, what the standard is to reach that."

Overall, Simington said broadcasters, both video and audio, are in a really tough situation. "We can't continue on the current trajectory. We are already seeing stations close. We are already seeing licenses fall into disuse. That is not a good situation for the country because we have all sorts of fundamental dependencies on the continued viability of broadcast that there's no clear way to replace," he said during a fireside chat with former FCC Chair and **Wiley Rein** Co-Founder *Dick Wiley*. "It's very important for us to fully accept our responsibilities at this time to promote continuity of broadcasting and ensure that whatever transformations the broadcast industry needs to go through, it's equipped to go through them, and it's not being held back simply by Commission inertia."

He said that means reforming broadband ownership rules and making sure it's clear that the FCC is "reopened for business" on the M&A front. That includes the FCC considering all reasonable things it can do statutorily in terms of ownership

28th Annual CABLE HALL of FAME

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025 • ZIEGFELD BALLROOM • NYC

THE CABLE CENTER'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

RESERVE YOUR TABLES AND SPONSORSHIPS NOW

720.502.7513 | myacovetta@cablecenter.org

www.CABLEHALLofFAME.com

2025 HONOREES

ED BREEN
General Instrument

ZENITA HENDERSON
Point Broadband

ANDREW ROSS SORKIN
Squawk Box, CNBC

JOSEPH M. (JOE) COHEN
The Switch Sports Group, West Ridge Associates

PATRICIA (PAT) KEHOE
PK Network Communications

BILL STEMPER
Comcast Business, Comcast Corporation

INNOVATION AND INTRAPRENEURSHIP
AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE:

JAKE PERLMAN

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS (AS OF 3/3/25)


















reforms, but also extending to Congress a realistic assessment of the dangers of Congress failing to act in terms of reform, he added. Yes, that look includes the national audience cap that prevents a broadcaster from reaching more than 39% of television households in the country—a limit that was put into law by the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

“The obvious point to make is that, outside of broadcasting, content has gone fully international. The worldwide revenues of a company like YouTube, for example, are over \$30 billion. These are the new players in terms of media,” Simington said. “When I saw the numbers flip and streaming subscriptions had surpassed cable subscriptions in 2023, I thought there would be immediate action, immediate response from the government. But I don’t know that many people directly noticed.” He views that metric as sort of like an uptick in bankruptcies that can signal the beginning of a recession. “Right now, I’m not just looking at the numbers, I’m looking at the derivative. I’m looking at the slope. The trend line should suggest that we are about to see a potential period of catastrophic decline, and we have a limited window in which to stave it off. I really take this very seriously. We need action in 2025 ideally in Q2 2025,” Simington said.

The second area he believes the agency needs to act on fast is the ATSC 3.0 transition. “We need a date certain, and we need it now. We’re not going to see the price of ATSC 3 receivers go down until we have universal adoption,” Simington said. He pushed back on the notion that the FCC is protecting some significant public interest by failing to push through the transition domestically when there’s great interest in the technology overseas, saying he wants to see hard numbers because he doesn’t think they will justify holding back a date certain.

CHARTER, COMCAST ADD SATELLITE FOR MOBILE

Satellite connectivity is getting a boost for **Charter’s** Spectrum Mobile and **Comcast’s** Xfinity Mobile respective customers. The two companies, as well as **Comcast Business Mobile** and **Spectrum Mobile**, are working with the non-terrestrial network service provider **Skylo** to deploy satellite-based services to users, starting with availability on **Samsung’s** Galaxy S25 and **Google** Pixel 9. Satellite connectivity lets users access emergency messaging services when their device isn’t connected to either a cellular or WiFi network. It also lets folks send and receive SMS text messages, but that feature will be added in the coming weeks. Some customers already have satellite services on select **Apple** and **Google** devices, however, they’re provided by the manufacturers themselves and specific services vary by device type. Skylo has plans to make its services available on more devices in the future.

CARR FCC TAKES FIRST STAB AT COPPER DEREGULATION

The **FCC** announced Thursday an initial set of actions to open the door for the transition of operators away from copper toward modern network infrastructure. It adopted an order waiving requirements that previously kicked in when providers stopped offering a legacy service to new customers. It also adopted a waiver allowing providers to retire copper networks in cases not only where replacement voice services are available on a standalone basis, but also in areas where services are available on a bundled basis. The FCC also adopted an order waiving notice requirements, which it called costly and excessive, in cases where they provide no demonstrable benefit. Finally, the agency adopted a clarification giving providers the ability to use streamlined procedures more often when they submit applications to discontinue their copper lines.

CONSERVATIVE ORGS ASK FOR ‘60 MINUTES’ COMPLAINT DISMISSAL

A coalition of conservative organizations wrote the **FCC** Wednesday asking the agency to dismiss the **Center for American Rights’** complaint regarding a “60 Minutes” interview with former Vice President **Kamala Harris**. The letter, which included signatures from the leaders of **Americans for Tax Reform**, **Digital Liberty**, **Taxpayers Protection Alliance** and more, said that while the concerns that motivated the complaint were understandable, an adverse ruling would ultimately constitute regulatory overreach and set a precedent that could be weaponized by future FCCs. The groups instead asked the Commission to streamline license renewals and merger reviews to ultimately eliminate news distortion and hoax-related rules. It has concerns that should the FCC rule against **CBS**, a future Democrat-led Commission could then be empowered to take similar actions in the future against a conservative media outlet. “Further, while we fully understand and appreciate the frustrations many Americans have with media bias, we believe any adverse rulings against CBS as a result of CAR’s petition would create far more harm than good, including for the future of conservative media,” the letter said. “We urge you to dismiss the complaint from CAR and take steps to curtail the Commission’s ability to engage in content-based regulation and reviews. In doing so, you can help ensure that future FCCs cannot be politicized in harmful ways.”

DIRECTV, RANGERS PLAYING BALL

The **MLB’s** Rangers and **DirecTV** are expanding their partnership beyond the [carriage deal](#) that was signed in January. The MVPD is sponsoring the 2023 World Series winners, with

DirecTV installing signage and messaging across Globe Life Field and the adjacent Texas Live! Entertainment complex. That includes DirecTV branding on the video board, LED ribbon boards and IPTV programming throughout the venues.

SPECTRUM'S EDUCATION BENEFIT

Charter is seeing the advantages of Spectrum's Education Benefit, a program that covers 100% of tuition costs upfront for full-time employees pursuing certain online degree and certificate programs. Over 13,000 Spectrum employees have participated in or completed a program since the Education Benefit launched in August 2023, and among participants, 68% are frontline and customer-facing employees. The program has led to folks climbing the company ladder as well. Employees enrolled in the initiative have received promotions at a rate 24% higher than those not participating. Spectrum also retains participants at a 10% higher rate than non-participants. Overall, Spectrum's Education Benefit enables access to nearly 300 online degree and certificate programs from 30 universities and learning providers.

ON THE HILL

Senate Commerce Chair Ted Cruz (R-TX) revealed the nomination hearing for *Arielle Roth* will be held March 27 at 2:15pm ET. She was nominated by *President Trump* to lead **NTIA**, putting her in charge of BEAD at a pivotal time for the program. For now, *Adam Cassady*, who was serving as Chief of Staff for FCC Commissioner *Nathan Simington*, is Acting NTIA Administrator. Before joining the FCC, Cassady co-founded **Tyche**, a technology company focused on using data and machine learning to improve insurance underwriting.

TUBI DIGS INTO STREAMING

Streaming is a welcome distraction for viewers, but advertisements continue to be a burden. **Tubi** took a look at the disconnect between advertisers and audiences in its annual report "The Stream," finding that 79% of consumers expect to see no ads if they're paying for a streaming service. However, 81% do say that watching ads is a fair trade to watch content for free. Viewers hope to see ads that align with their interests as 59% of folks said they'd consider taking action after seeing interesting ads while streaming. That number jumps up to 81% for Gen Z specifically, but 73% in that demo also think the ads they see on stream-

ing are misaligned with personal preferences. Speaking of Gen Z, 76% of those viewers have or would cancel streaming subscriptions because of a price increase. Bosses and managers look away: 53% of Gen Z viewers said they've put off working because they "had" to finish a show they were bingeing, and 52% noted they don't want to return to the office because they'll miss streaming during the workday. That doesn't stop all of them, though, as 38% admit they stream at their job site.

FIBER FRENZY

Make that 10 states for **Lumos'** footprint. The company announced its inaugural expansion into Indiana, building more than 1,200 miles of fiber-optic internet across Clark and Floyd Counties. Lumos will be available to over 81,000 addresses in the cities of Charlestown, Jeffersonville and New Albany in addition to the towns of Sellersburg and Clarksville. – **Metronet** pulled the curtain back on a privately funded multimillion-dollar project to build its fiber network in Kokomo, Indiana. The company is expected to break ground in late Spring, and the first customers to get service should come in the Summer. Metronet, whose HQ resides in the Hoosier State, offers up to 5 Gbps for residents and up to 10 Gbps for businesses.

RATINGS

Despite the 11:55pm start time Saturday, **Formula 1's** Australian Grand Prix drew an event-record 1.1 million viewers on **ESPN**. That surpassed the previous record of 659,000 in 2019 and is up from the 541,000 viewers for last year's race on **ESPN2**. The telecast also posted 560,000 viewers in the P18-49 group. Next up is Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix, which begins bright and early at 2:55am on ESPN.

PROGRAMMING

Max announced that Season 2 of "The Last of Us" will be available to stream in American Sign Language alongside each week's episode, starting with the premiere on April 13. Season 1 will become available to stream in ASL starting March 31. It's the first time **HBO** original programming will be available to stream in ASL on Max. – "Tulsa King" is returning for a third season on **Paramount+**. Production began this week in Atlanta and Oklahoma. – The seventh season of "The Chi" debuts May 16 for **Paramount+** with **Showtime** subscribers. It'll make its linear premiere May 18 at 9pm.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (03/10/25-03/16/25)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.922	2923
ESPN	0.433	1373
MSNBC	0.368	1168
HGTV	0.220	697
HALL	0.178	564
CNN	0.178	563
HIST	0.161	511
TBSC	0.154	489
FOOD	0.145	459
USA	0.132	417
INSP	0.130	412
DISC	0.127	403
ESPN2	0.120	382
TLC	0.116	368
TVLAND	0.094	297
ID	0.093	294
BRAVO	0.090	286
TNT	0.088	278
A&E	0.087	275
NWSMX	0.086	272
WETV	0.083	264
LIFE	0.083	262
HALLMYS	0.082	259
GSN	0.078	248
OXY	0.072	228
AMC	0.072	227
NAN	0.071	227
REELZ	0.069	219
FX	0.066	209
PRMNT	0.064	204
MTV	0.059	188
ADSM	0.059	188
BET	0.058	182
NATGEO	0.056	177
COM	0.054	172
FRFM	0.054	172
TRAVEL	0.053	169
BTN	0.051	162
DSNY	0.050	158
FS1	0.048	152
FETV	0.045	142
SNDNCE	0.043	138
CMT	0.043	138
SYFY	0.042	134
LMN	0.041	130
FXN	0.041	130
HLN	0.040	128

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



BEYOND THE BANDWIDTH

ISPs Prioritize Resiliency in Times of Calm and Chaos

It's been a tough six months for portions of the United States that have been ravaged by natural disasters. In that time period alone, two major hurricanes wreaked havoc on the southeastern U.S. and wildfires in California devastated parts of Los Angeles. And while connectivity is a part of how people live and work every day, there is no time in which it becomes more important than in those times of trouble.

During a recent appearance on the **Fiber Broadband Association's** Fiber for Breakfast series, **Hawaiian Telcom** President *Su Shin* spoke to the immense challenge that comes with meeting those moments.

"This kind of connectivity is incredibly important... but certainly in times of crisis, in times of natural disaster. Hawaii, we have our fair share from volcanic eruptions to hurricanes and floods. We just had some pretty severe weather in the early part of this year already with some pretty severe flooding," she said. "There's a word in the Hawaiian language, it's called kuleana and it means responsibility. I think it is what motivates our team in times of crisis like the Maui wildfires, natural disasters, hurricanes and the like."

But the work doesn't begin when a storm clears or the fire is out. Operators are investing more than ever in network resiliency, having conversations around how to prevent outages and reconnecting customers quickly when they are cut off from service.

SCTE has also been playing its part, creating a Business Continuity Planning and Disaster Recovery Working Group focused on developing standards and operational practices to prepare for and respond to natural and man-made disasters that can lead to service disruptions.

SCTE Senior Director, Energy Management Programs and Business Continuity *Derek DiGiacomo* is the primary liaison for that working group, which has produced a number of documents that speak to readiness, recovery and preparedness. Among them are [SCTE 227](#), which lays out a location risk assessment framework to identify threats that could negatively impact the ability of an operator to conduct business in a geographic location, and [SCTE 286](#), which lays out operational practices for gaining access to incident areas.

"We're subject to so many things, so we're constantly dealing with little things that pop up and we've always just handled it. That's what cable has done through and through," he told **CFX**. "We have our plans in place to respond to those things, but as an industry, we are now seen as critical infrastructure in the eyes of the government, speaking mainly for the U.S. Having all these things in place, whether

it's a location risk assessment or business impact analysis, helps us be more mature, more ready and able to recover faster than we did 10-plus years ago."

SCTE is strengthening its role as a liaison between cable operators and government officials, developing relationships with local, state and federal officials to enhance coordination during those critical moments.

Beyond that, it is also communicating more than ever with those in the power and utility space as well as municipalities and vegetation management companies to ensure that cable operators have the right local contacts to ensure recovery efforts happen quickly and safely.

"We're communicating with them during the 'blue sky days' that you need to work with us as an industry and be cognizant of downed wires," he said.

Some of those messages around minimizing the creation of additional problems during times of recovery are to be wary of cutting cables or fiber when clearing debris. DiGiacomo had the opportunity to present to the State Privacy Sector Liaison Working Group last spring and instill in its members the rationale behind the initiative.

"A number of them have woven that conversation into making the response crews aware of care and caution of downed wires from both a safety factor, because they could be carrying voltage that they weren't aware of, and communications that you don't want to sabotage yourself, because just because it's not a cell tower doesn't mean it's not carrying critical communication that connects one cell tower to another or to backbone internet," DiGiacomo said.

While that's a great success, it takes constant maintenance to keep those connections and find new contacts when those holding positions in local or state government leave their roles. That's a massive undertaking, particularly in times of volatility.

"Changeover there could trickle down into our local and state recovery needs, so making sure we bang the drum and keep those communication lines of who is playing in the space is absolutely vital," he said.

He's also keeping an eye on the elevated risk of unknown natural disasters due to extreme weather conditions like those that fed into the wildfires in California and ensuring there's always enough equipment available to properly repair networks in the aftermath.

"That's challenging, whether it's maintaining the right supply chain to respond to that, we need to make sure that we're also in communication with the vendor community when we do need to respond that the supplies are in-hand and on-site, ready to go for deployment when it is safe to restore and rebuild those networks," DiGiacomo said.