

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## News Views: Project Rise OK with Fairness Doctrine, Carr Defends CBS Move

Investment group **Project Rise Partners** visited the **FCC** recently to reiterate national security concerns as well as the potential for higher retransmission consent fees for a **Skydance-Paramount** merger. It also outlined its vision for Paramount, which would include returning to the principles of the abolished Fairness Doctrine that mandated broadcast networks devote time to contrasting views on issues of public importance.

Skydance [told](#) the FCC last month that Project Rise's rejected \$13.5 billion bid for Paramount was not timely and "unserious." While the investment group acknowledged that the FCC may not consider alternative buyers of Paramount, it argued that the Skydance March letter to the agency was an attack on its qualifications and forced it to respond. At a time when the FCC Chair Brendan Carr has raised concerns about censorship of conservative voices, Project Rise said it would take steps to ensure it operates Paramount with all viewpoints in mind.

"As part of its efforts to build on Paramount's venerable past, Project Rise will seek a return to the vision and practice of CBS's—the Tiffany Network's—formative titans, *Bill Paley* and *Walter Cronkite*, free from bias, dedicated to excellence and presenting the news in the way that it is," the group said in an ex parte filed this week describing a March 31 meeting that included *Daphna Ziman*, *Moses Gross* and *Lee Caplin* from Project Rise as well as *Erin Boone*, Acting FCC Media Bureau Chief and Chairman Carr's Media Legal Advisor, as well as other FCC staffers. "To ensure fair and balanced coverage of the news, Project Rise will take steps to ensure that it operates with all viewpoints in mind. Returning to the principles underlying the dormant Fairness Doctrine, Project Rise will provide an organizational structure that allows and considers public input to capture all viewpoints and prevent news coverage distortion."

As Chairman, Carr re-opened a news distortion complaint

against CBS' "60 Minutes" regarding its editing of an interview of *Kamala Harris*. On Thursday, the FCC released a letter in which Carr responded to concerns from Sen *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT), who sought info on what he called an "unprecedented, intrusive investigations against media broadcasters." Carr said he's undoing the "*Biden-era* weaponization" of the FCC, committing to "basic fairness and even-handed treatment for all."

He specifically addressed the senator's concern that the FCC is treating the CBS complaint differently by reinstating it and not a news distortion complaint against a **Fox** TV station (WTFX-TV) that was also closed in January. Instead, he said opening a proceeding on the CBS complaint puts it on equal footing with the dismissed Fox complaint, since the previous FCC entertained the petition and left it open for more than a year, with more than 200 comments received from the public. "It is not clear to me how the prior FCC could have dismissed the CBS petition without doing its due diligence. Under my leadership, the FCC is seeking comment on the CBS petition, just as the prior FCC did on the Fox petition," he wrote.

Carr's missive went on to cite several instances of what it called FCC weaponization under the Biden administration. Those include House Commerce Dems launching a letter-writing campaign to [pressure](#) cable companies and other video providers to drop what they called "Right-wing media outlets" like **Fox News**, **Newsmax** and **One America News** as well as the Commission [revoking](#) an \$885 million award that **Starlink** won in 2020 to extend high-speed Internet service to over 640,000 rural homes and businesses across 35 states.

**The Media and Democracy Project** (MAD), which filed the FCC petition against the Fox station, immediately rejected Carr's stance. "The FCC censor-in-chief's response to Senator Blumenthal is both misguided and dismissive of the facts. Chairman Carr conflates a dispute about content with a question about character. There's no question that the content

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distributed by Fox Corporation under the direction of *Rupert and Lachlan Murdoch* was not just misleading but objectively false. A judge found exactly that in a fully briefed and argued decision that was acknowledged and undisputed by Fox,” said MAD co-founder *Brian Hansbury*, in a statement. “The question for the Commission is whether people who would at the least allow—and at the worst actively cause—the broadcast of such lies have the character to hold broadcast licenses that, under the law, are to be used to serve the public interest. Chairman Carr’s attempt to justify his hyper-partisan effort to facilitate President Trump’s terrifying campaign to censor and coerce speech with our petition is as disingenuous as his Orwellian attempt to twist the Commission’s ‘public interest’ and ‘character’ standards into partisan tools.”

As for Project Rise, it argued during its FCC meetings that Skydance still hasn’t substantively addressed concerns about the Paramount transaction. “Project Rise’s still unanswered questions relating to national security, consumer welfare, the potential negative effects of AI, and gun-jumping, still demand answers—answers that should be supported by the production of documents. Without these answers, the Commission simply cannot determine that Skydance’s proposed acquisition of Paramount would serve the public interest,” the group said.

## TELECOM MAY BE WELL POSITIONED TO WEATHER TARIFFS

It might be too soon to expect a market rebound amid the reactions to President *Trump*’s widespread tariffs that were announced this week. The S&P 500 dipped by more than 5% shortly before market close Friday, just after it fell 4.84% on Thursday. The Dow, meanwhile, ended the week by falling over 4% after a 3.98% decline Thursday, and the Nasdaq saw a 5.25% dip Friday. However, despite the immediate downturn, there are still some industries that might be positioned to weather the storm. That includes the telecommunications sector, and **New Street Research** thinks that wireless, cable and fiber companies are in a safe haven from the likely impacts of tariffs. A recession, though, might be a different story. “Revenue and EBITDA impacts are likely to be neutral to modestly positive. Tariffs will push equipment costs higher threatening capex and [free cash flow]; however, carriers are likely to slow deployment to preserve the current trajectories of dividends and repurchases,” the firm wrote in a note. “A recession would negatively impact the sector, though far less than the broader economy. Communications Services would be a relative winner.” Stock-wise, wireless and broadband companies should take a defensive stance, according to New Street, as they stand to benefit more from tax reform than other companies given high CapEx and leverage. **CNBC** will provide more analysis on the

tariffs during a one-hour “CNBC Special Report” on Sunday. It’ll begin at 7pm and be hosted by *CNBC’s Kelly Evans*, focusing on the tariffs’ impacts on the U.S. and global markets.

## KICKING THE TIKTOK CAN AGAIN

Doomscrollers, rejoice. President *Trump* signed an executive order that keeps **TikTok** up and running for an additional 75 days. It’s the second time TikTok got a 75-day deadline extension, with Trump having given one back in January when the social media app briefly went dark for Americans. Trump said on **Truth Social** that the deal “requires more work to ensure all necessary approvals are signed,” adding that he hopes to continue negotiating in good faith with China (note: TikTok is currently owned by the Chinese company **ByteDance**, and Chinese President *Xi Jinping* must sign off on any ownership change).

## DAZN, NEWS CORP. SHAKE HANDS ON FOXTEL DEAL

**News Corp.** wrapped up the sale of Australian pay TV company **Foxtel** to **DAZN**. The deal, worth \$2.1 billion USD, needed approval from the Australian Foreign Investment Review Board in order to cross the finish line. Foxtel will continue to operate as a standalone business under DAZN’s ownership. Foxtel, **Kayo Sports**, **BINGE** and **Hubbl** will retain their brand identities amid an overall phased integration process. News Corp. owned Foxtel for 30 years and said the move will let it focus on other growth areas while bolstering its balance sheet. News Corp. will retain a 6% stake in DAZN in addition to having a seat on the board through SVP and Deputy CFO *Andrew Cramer*.

## FIBER FRENZY

Louisiana’s community-owned fiber network LUS Fiber is rebranding as **LFT Fiber**. The name reflects the provider’s growing regional presence in Acadiana and South Louisiana. – **GoNetspeed** is making an upgrade for more than 30,000 business locations on its network. It announced investments that have paved the way for it to provide its Elite Dedicated Internet to select business addresses, meaning business and enterprise customers can get symmetrical upload and download speeds of up to 10 Gbps. Elite Dedicated Internet features a connection with a dedicated circuit, along with uninterrupted bandwidth for consistent performance and speed.

## RATINGS

The early indicators of Yankees viewership are so far, so good for **YES Network**. Through its first two telecasts of the 2025 cam-

paigh, the events averaged 368,000 total viewers on the YES linear network, a figure that's above all other cable programming in March in the New York DMA. That includes March Madness and other sports programming. Sunday's telecast was the most-viewed program on cable that day in the NY market, averaging 432,000 total viewers and peaking at 496,000 from 3:45-4pm. Saturday's game came in at 309,000 viewers. In total, approximately 1.1 million unduplicated total viewers in the NY DMA watched YES' linear network during Opening Weekend (March 27-30).

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## PEOPLE

Remember when *Ken Solomon's* exit from **Tennis Channel** stemmed from his role as a board member/adviser for *Dr. Phil McGraw's Merit Street Media*? Well, Solomon has a [new gig](#) per *The Hollywood Reporter*, and it's President and CEO of Merit Street's **Merit TV**. Solomon—a longtime tennis partner of McGraw's—will be tasked with growing MeritTV's operations. The network's lineup

currently includes "Dr. Phil Primetime," "Steve" with Steve Harvey and "Crime Stories" with Nancy Grace. Tennis Channel has yet to name a full-time successor to Solomon, tapping then-EVP, COO and CFO *Bill Simon* as interim President [in September](#).

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## HAPPY TRAILS

The **CFX** team is both proud and a little heartbroken to bid farewell to Managing Editor *Sara Winegardner*, who is retiring her keyboard after nearly eight years with the brand to pursue new opportunities. She joined the team as Associate Editor while literally still in college—balancing a virtual final exam with the Cablefax Leaders' Retreat in Amelia Island, Florida. She quickly established herself as an industry expert, tackling everything from spectrum wars to program carriage disputes. Sara brought professionalism, curiosity and drive to every story she pursued, no matter how many flight delays or travel mishaps stood in her way. Join us in wishing her well on her next chapter.



## CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

### Social Media Hits



### Quotable

*"We've been talking to [major countries] for more than a month. This has been coming. We've said it's been coming. The key is will they take our agricultural products? Will they treat us fairly? Can they treat us fairly? And the answer is over time that is going to be yes. American products are going to be better sold elsewhere in the world, but the fact remains we are treated unfairly and they have built, structurally into their markets, this unfairness... We need to stop supporting the rest of the world and start supporting American workers."*

- U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick speaking on tariffs on [CNBC's "Squawk Box"](#)



### Up Ahead

**APRIL 5-9:** [NAB Show](#); Las Vegas

**APRIL 7-8:** [Mid-America Show](#); Kansas City

**APRIL 16-17:** [Pennsylvania Broadband Summit](#); Gettysburg, PA

**APRIL 27-29:** [NTCA Legislative and Policy Conference](#); Washington, D.C.

**APRIL 28-MAY 1:** [CableLabs Interop Labs CPMP XGS-PON](#); Louisville, CO

**MAY 6:** [WICT Network Signature Awards Luncheon](#); Los Angeles