

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Under Review: Senate Commerce Turns to the Field of Streams

One of the persistent hurdles in the migration to streaming services is the fragmentation felt by sports fans, and **Senate Commerce** turned its attention to the issue during a hearing Tuesday titled “Field of Streams: The New Channel Guide for Sports Fans.” Witnesses included reps from **MLB**, **NBA** and **NHL** discussing the ways how watching live sports on TV has changed amid the rise of digital platforms and streaming services. Notably absent is the biggest league of them all, the **NFL**, which declined its invitation to participate in the hearing.

Nonetheless, Committee Chairman **Ted Cruz** (R-TX) embarked on delving into an issue he thinks relates to antitrust exemption. He posed a question asking what fans deserve in return for leagues getting special treatment under the law, whether it be through antitrust protection, nonprofit status or taxpayer financing of stadiums. Cruz brought up the 1961 Sports Broadcasting Act that granted professional leagues antitrust immunity when it comes to negotiating national broadcast deals on behalf of teams.

“The SBA was intended to ensure that the needs of all sports fans were being met. I think it’s important to regularly revisit and consider whether our laws, like the Sports Broadcasting Act, are actually fulfilling their intended goals,” Cruz said, suggesting that a similar protection could be given to the college ranks. “If the leagues can show how the SBA continues to benefit fans today, it may be worth exploring whether to give

## WICT Signature Lunch coverage on P. 2.

a similar exemption to college sports, whose broadcasting rights have no antitrust protection.”

MLB EVP, Media and Business Development **Kenny Gersh** said the SBA helps create a fan-friendly, market-efficient practice that has resulted in a higher output of games rather than fewer. It’s enabled MLB to create MLB Advanced Media, where each franchise pooled their digital media rights and allowed the league to stream games via the internet. That’s opposed to each individual team having to manage apps across multiple operating systems and devices.

**Rob Manfred**, MLB Commissioner, has been transparent with his desire to shake up how the league distributes games. Once its national TV deals expire in 2028, MLB will look to create a more nationally focused model to make games more accessible on a larger scale. “Whether it’s a national streaming package or **MLB Network** becomes the home of local baseball ... the idea is to make it simpler for fans. We do understand the fan frustration [and] we take that very seriously,” Gersh said.

NBA President, Global Content and Media Distribution **William Koenig** echoed the SBA’s enablement of technological and distribution innovations, but added the benefits of being able to license games for free OTA.

“On a national basis, we were able to license a record number of free over-the-air telecasts. That benefits all teams

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in terms of exposure, because games are available in every market, but also being able to license games on a league-wide, national basis. The revenue is shared equally by each team ... all teams benefit from those national distribution deals.”

Cruz wanted to know why blackouts still exist on streamers even though those platforms aren't bound by **FCC** rules about operating within a DMA. Gersh's take is that it stems from how MLB's rights are currently split between the league and clubs. Since fans can watch or stream in their respective market, they can watch out-of-market games on **MLB.TV**. The NBA and NHL are in a similar boat, but make no mistake: blackouts are an issue all leagues are trying to address soon.

“If I'm being completely candid, everybody's looking at the future of the models right now. Models are in the state of flux, and whether streaming results in blackouts or blackouts not happening in the future is something that may be addressed by the leagues over the next 5-10 years, but it is at this point, the current model, that has worked and has worked very well,” *David Proper*, NHL SVP, Media and International Strategy, said.

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## SALUTING WICT'S HONOREES

Evolution, inclusion and uplifting women across the full spectrum of the media landscape were on the menu Tuesday when **The WICT Network** honored its 2025 Women of the Year and Women to Watch at its Signature Awards Luncheon at the Four Seasons Beverly Wilshire Hotel in L.A. The event, hosted in partnership with the **Motion Picture Association**, recognizes exceptional leaders from the media, entertainment and technology sectors—both those women who have made their mark over decades in the industry, and those who are rising and shining in their fields. The Woman of the Year Award is WICT's highest individual honor and, as such, it was an afternoon of cheers, tears and a deep gratitude for the people—both professional and personal (cue lots of hat tips to moms and adorable video salutations from some of their kids)—who've boosted the honorees along their journey. After remarks by WICT Network President/CEO *Maria Brennan*, WICT Global Chair and **TV One** and **CLEO TV** President *Michelle Rice* joined MPA Senior EVP *Gail MacKinnon* to remind the packed room of the importance of bringing a broad swath of voices to the conversation. “Culture, whether it's in a company or on a set, thrives when everyone is seen, heard and valued,” *Rice* said. “It's not just a philosophy, it's a business imperative.” The stage was then set to salute this year's six honorees, who were each introduced in turn by an executive deeply connected to her career trajectory:

**Women of the Year:** *Jennifer Yohe*, SVP and Chief Procurement Officer, **Optimum**; *Elizabeth Wright*, EVP and CFO, Direct to Consumer Segment, **Paramount Global** – Entertainment;

*Susan Tanamli*, CTO & EVP, Head of Global Technology and Media Operations, **A+E Global Media** – Technology. (Click the names to read our Q&As with each honoree)

**Women To Watch:** *Alison Hellman*, SVP & General Manager, **Spectrum News** – Media; *Lauren Morrissey*, SVP, Platform Distribution Sales, **The Walt Disney Company** – Entertainment; and *Rachel Solomon*, SVP, Technical Operations and Engineering, **Comcast NBCUniversal** - Technology

While those who introduced them lavished praise on the women's accomplishments, the honorees took their time in the spotlight to shout out both the industry and WICT's network of deep women-championing work and events, and its Betsy Magness leadership development program. Noting she's been in the industry since “the cloud was just a puffy thing in the sky and fiber expansion was a dietary consideration,” *Yohe* praised the community that “has anchored me throughout my journey... Our industry often feels like family, and the love I feel today is proof of that,” she said, adding, “Believe in yourself and be good to yourself. Remember, we learn from each other.” Recalling the times when “streaming was a curiosity, not a category,” *Wright* noted, “I often found myself the only woman in the room,” before saluting the “collective power of mentorship.” There was also a strong nod to the importance of paying it forward. “True professional success is measured by the impact we have on others, and in that spirit, I am committed to paying it forward and carving pathways for those who are still finding their way,” said *Tanamli*.

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## SPINCO HAS A NAME

What has been dubbed “SpinCo” since **Comcast** announced [plans to jettison some of its cable networks](#) under a new company now has an official moniker. The new public entity will be known as **Versant**, its future CEO *Mark Lazarus* announced in a memo. “VERSANT represents more than a name—it speaks to our adaptability and embraces the opportunity to shape a new, modern media company,” the memo read. *Lazarus* added that over 5,000 people have expressed interest in joining the Versant team in the past month. A comprehensive careers site will be rolled out later this week, and the company is still in the process of choosing a permanent HQ in Manhattan.

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## FDSN'S DTC MOMENTUM

Although it was long awaited by baseball fans, **FanDuel Sports Network's** movement in the direct-to-consumer space is paying off so far. The company revealed that since the start of the 2025 **MLB** season, its streaming platform is nearing 650,000 paid subscribers and is on track to eclipse 1 million DTC subs by the end of 2025, per **Google Analytics**. FDSN's streaming product—which

is also made available through the RSNs' integration on **Prime Video**—averages around 250,000 unique daily users and nearly 1 million unique monthly users. *David Preschlack*, CEO of **Main Street Sports Group**, said it was a sign of progression for the company's "mission to reinvent the local sports media landscape." FDSN also reported that average watch-time per game is up 9% YOY to 92.5 minutes, and on average, FDSN's streaming audience viewers are 12 years younger than its traditional cable audience.

## XFINITY MOBILE ARENA IS CALLING PHILLY SPORTS FANS

Need yet another sign that cable is serious about the mobile business? **Comcast Spectacor** and **Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment** just announced that Wells Fargo Center, the home of the Philadelphia Flyers and 76ers, will be renamed **Xfinity Mobile Arena** effective Sept. 1 through the 2030-31 season. The rebrand comes some eight years after the launch of Xfinity Mobile, which ended 1Q25 with 8.1 million lines. Xfinity Mobile customers will automatically join a supercharged WiFi experience in the arena that will deliver fast speeds with Comcast's WiFi PowerBoost feature, all at no extra cost. Wells Fargo announced last year it would not renew naming rights. As previously announced, Comcast will own the naming rights to the arena being developed via a joint venture between Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment and Comcast Spectacor, set to open in the 2031-2032 season. Details will be announced at a later date.

## CURIOSITYSTREAM POSTS POSITIVE NET INCOME

Big milestone for streamer *John Hendricks'* **CuriosityStream**, which reported its first-ever positive net income in 1Q25. Net income came in at \$300,000, compared to net loss of \$5 million in 1Q24. "In light of our confidence in the future and our growth path, and in a continuing effort to reward our shareholders, we are doubling our quarterly dividend to \$0.08 per share," President/CEO *Clint Stinchcomb* said. "We believe our substantial quantity and quality of premium factual video and data represents a corpus of content that is uniquely attractive to a notably broad set of licensors and consumers." Revenue for the quarter came in at \$15.1 million, up from \$12 million a year ago, while adjusted EBITDA was \$1.1 million compared to a loss of \$2.8 million a year ago. Highlights during the quarter included the launch of Curiosity University as a premium subscription on **The Roku Channel** and licensing several million short-form and long-form programs for both AI training and traditional media distribution. The company expects 2Q25 revenue of \$16-17 million with adjusted FCF in the range of \$2-\$3 million.

## MEDIACOM REUPS WITH CSG

**Mediacom** and **CSG's** nearly 30-year relationship is still going strong with the two announcing a five-year extension of their partnership for billing, payments and customer experience solutions.

The deal includes use of CSG's Bill Explorer to deal with bill confusion and offer personalized outreach as well as the CSG Advanced Convergent Platform to boost efficiency and revenue growth.

## UNDOING E-RATE WIFI HOTSPOTS

The Senate is about to undo former **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel's* rule allowing schools and libraries to use E-Rate funding to loan WiFi hotspots to students and educators. On Tuesday, the Senate voted 53-47 along party lines to move ahead on the CRA resolution introduced by Sen *Ted Cruz* (R-TX). Cruz has opposed the 2024 FCC order, saying it unlawfully expanded the Universal Service Fund to subsidize WiFi hotspots for off-campus use and undermines parents' ability to control the content their kids can access online. Sen. *Ed Markey* (D-MA), the House author of the original E-Rate program, is hopping mad about it all. "This resolution won't save any money, but it will cost our country dearly in lost opportunity. It undermines years of progress closing the Homework Gap and turns our backs on children who simply want to learn and thrive," Markey said.

## SENATE COMMERCE ADDRESSES FUNDING CUTS TO PBS, NPR

President *Trump's* Executive Order to halt federal funding for **PBS** and **NPR** found its way into Tuesday's **Senate Commerce** streaming hearing. Ranking Member *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) began her opening remarks by denouncing the move, saying every community—particularly rural ones—should have access to local journalism. That of course was followed by a response in favor of the order from Committee Chairman *Ted Cruz*, but later in the hearing, Sen. *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) joined Cantwell in voicing displeasure for the move, eventually asking **Public Knowledge** Legal Director *John Bergmayer* why PBS and NPR hold importance for society. "[Rural areas] typically have less broadband coverage to households, and people can tune into the radio in places where there is no wireless coverage at all," Bergmayer said. "Especially as commercial stations are often struggling as local ad dollars shift to online platforms like Facebook, I think it really underscores the importance of other models to provide the kinds of information that these stations provide ... there's going to be many news deserts if these stations shut down."

## PEOPLE

*Sena Fitzmaurice*, a past **Cablefax** FAXIES PR Executive of the Year honoree, is retiring from her role as SVP/Corporate Communications at **Comcast Corp.** at the end of the year. She joined the operator as Senior Director in its DC office in 2006, but her time went back even further with Comcast one of her clients at *Wexler & Walker Public Policy Associates*. Her tenure with Comcast has spanned 10 Congresses, five administrations, and six different **FCC** chairs. We're waiting to see what her next chapter is (fun fact: Fitzmaurice was a trained docent at the National Gallery of Art).