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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Not So Fast: Cities Wave Red Flag on FCC Cable TV Rate Regulation Plan

There's a lot of doubt over whether the **FCC** will be able to hold its June open meeting with only two sitting commissioners, but if it does, local governments are crying foul over Chairman *Brendan Carr*'s plan to vote on a report and order aimed at reducing regulatory burdens around cable television rates.

"The Commission's decision to adopt a report and order in a docket that has seen no comments in five years without seeking comment to update the record is highly unusual and deprives the Commission of updated data or arguments," said a joint filing from multiple local governments, including Los Angeles County, CA; Fairfax County, VA; Boston, MA; and D.C.

The last comment they appear to be referring to came in 2020 from **NCTA**, which includes the argument that the FCC should eliminate Section 76.980 of its rules, which governs charges for changes in service tiers in rate-regulated communities. The trade association believes the rule was made obsolete by the sunset of cable programming service tier regulation more than 20 years ago because the statutory provision on which it was based was intended to apply only when a subscriber added or dropped a regulated service. "At a minimum, the Commission should revise the rule to apply only when a subscriber chooses to downgrade its service to basic-service tier-only. This approach would be consistent with the proposal by the State of Hawaii," NCTA said.

Local governments are wary about proposals to remove rate

regulation, something they reiterated in their comments in the Delete, Delete, Delete docket. "Proposals to remove rate regulation must be conducted with extreme care because the Cable Act's rate regulation provisions are still in place. The Commission's presumptions with respect to effective competition are rebuttable, and therefore the rules continue to serve a purpose," they said.

Carr outlined plans to take up cable rate regulation provisions in a blog post last week, though he acknowledged that the departures of Commissioners *Nathan Simington* and *Geoffrey Starks* could mean the agency doesn't have the three Commissioners needed for the required quorum to conduct business at the June 26 meeting. If the item does get adopted, the FCC would remove 77 rules and requirements from the books.

In most of the U.S., basic service rates are no longer regulated because the markets are deemed to be competitive by law due to the availability of satellite television and other services. The FCC adopted an item in 2018 to review and eliminate outdated rules around rate regulation, but there has been no follow-up item until now.

In addition to following NCTA's suggestion on sunseting Section 76.980, the FCC's June Report & Order would eliminate unnecessary forms and rules, deregulating cable equipment not used to exclusively receive the basic tier and exempt operators from rate regulation with 15,000 or fewer subscribers that are owned by small cable companies serving 400,000 or fewer subscribers.



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DISNEY SAYS NO TO SPINOFFS

Disney is not interested in divesting or spinning off any of its linear or streaming products any time soon. That's according to CEO *Bob Iger*, who confirmed to **CNBC** that the company did at one point look at whether it should sell some of its linear products or even **Hulu**. "We decided that the best course for us to take was to not only hold on to Hulu and buy it in its entirety but also to hold on to the linear television networks and to integrate them seamlessly with our streaming business because what that has enabled us to do is aggregate revenue, both on the sub-free side and on the advertising side." Iger added that the approach gave Disney enough linear TV subscribers to "generate a significant amount of revenue in both cases, in advertising and in subscription fees" and that linear and streaming make up a "winning combination" that has helped Disney turn its streaming business around from "a huge loss of profitability." To Iger, a broadcast network is more valuable if "paired very seamlessly with a streaming business." Disney's strategy is certainly in stark contrast to what **Comcast** is doing with its **Versant** spinoff and what **Warner Bros. Discovery** decided to do yesterday when it announced it would split into two separate publicly traded companies, detaching its linear networks from its streaming and studio assets. WBD CEO *David Zaslav* will lead the Streaming & Studios company, while CFO *Gunnar Wiedenfels* has been tapped to lead Global Networks, but there's plenty of talk in town regarding what the companies' org charts will look like for other senior leaders at the company. *Channing Dungey*, who operated on both streaming and linear sides of WBD as Chairman and CEO, Warner Bros. Television Group and U.S. Networks, said in a memo on Monday that she would "continue to have the privilege of leading WBTVG," which will be folded into Streaming & Studios. There are also questions of what the split means for *Brett Paul*, President, WBTVG and COO, U.S. Networks. It's not clear as of yet how their roles will evolve under S&S. There's also the question of *David Leavy*, who stepped away from his role as COO of **CNN** in May to return to WBD and work directly with Zaslav. What his role will be in all this is another mystery. Time will tell what the future holds for these separate WBD entities (as well as Versant). Iger has the final word for today: "When you think about it, these spinoff companies won't have the assets from a streaming perspective that we will have. I think that gives us an advantage."

NAMIC CONFERENCE FEATURES CHOW, INCLUSIVITY IMPERATIVE

Former **AT&T Business** CEO *Anne Chow*—the first woman of color CEO in **AT&T's** 140-year history—is slated to give the opening keynote at the 2025 Annual NAMIC Conference on Oct. 21.

"Anne Chow is the perfect voice to help us thread what's critical in this moment: courage, clarity and the conviction to lead bigger," said NAMIC's Chief of Strategy and Programs *Anne-Marie Burton*. The 39th NAMIC conference—set for Oct. 21-22 at the NY Marriott Marquis—carries the theme "Accelerating Inclusive Leadership." We got Burton to expand a bit on the creation of a conference track this year called "Inclusion & Collaboration." "We're at a turning point where inclusive leadership isn't just a cultural value, it's a strategic necessity. The industries NAMIC serves—media, entertainment, and technology—are undergoing massive transformation. From AI integration to shifting audience demands and hybrid work environments, the ability to foster collaboration across differences is key to staying competitive," she said. "This track is about equipping professionals to respond to those changes, and to lead through them—by tapping into the strength of a variety of perspectives, building coalitions and aligning people with purpose. Our members asked for deeper, more actionable strategies—and this track delivers." Sessions in the track include "Think Like a CEO," which reframes how ERGs operate—moving them from passion-driven groups to strategic business collaborators—and "Unapologetically Breaking Barriers, which examines challenging exclusion and building systems of support. "I want every attendee to leave with three things: the confidence to lead from their authentic voice, a strategy to strengthen collaboration within their organizations and a renewed sense of purpose in building inclusive teams," said Burton. [Online registration](#) is open now for NAMIC's Annual Conference.

HULU NOW FULLY CONTROLLED BY DISNEY

Disney will pay \$438.7 million to finally gain full control of **Hulu**, two years after the House of Mouse first announced its intentions to buy **Comcast's** 33% stake in the streaming service. The deal is expected to close on or before July 24. Disney initially paid \$8.6 billion for the stake, but a protracted appraisal process to decide the final total to be paid to Comcast delayed the closing. In a **CNBC** interview, Disney CEO *Bob Iger* said that getting full control of Hulu is a major step in the company's plans to bring Hulu, **Disney+** and **ESPN's** streaming apps "together fully, making basically not only a seamless experience for the consumer, but essentially a one-app purchase." Iger added that Disney also aimed to "turn Hulu into a more global brand as part of the Disney+ offering." In terms of seamlessness, Disney already offers bundles that give users access to all three streaming services. The launch of ESPN's DTC product will also come with its own set of [bundle options](#).

MORE PARAMOUNT LAYOFFS

A new round of layoffs has hit employees at **Paramount Global**. In a memo seen by **CFX**, the company said that it was cutting its workforce by 3.5%, largely affecting U.S. employees, although staff overseas could also be impacted. Paramount began notifying those affected today. The cuts come just shy of a year since Paramount's last round of layoffs, which saw the company eliminate 15% of its staff. The media company is also still stuck in a wait-and-see situation with the **FCC**, which hasn't yet approved its proposed \$8 billion merger with **Skydance Media**. President *Trump's* \$20 billion lawsuit against **CBS News** over a 2024 "60 Minutes" interview with *Kamala Harris* hasn't helped speed things along. Paramount reported a 6% revenue drop YoY in 1Q25.

FIBER FRENZY

Hawaiian Telcom continues on its path to make Hawaii the first fully fiber-enabled state by the end of 2026, announcing that Kaua'i is now fully-fiber enabled. That's the third island in the Aloha State to hit that milestone, with HT getting Moloka'i and Lanai to full fiber status in 2023. About 65% of Hawaii is now fully fiber enabled, representing more than 430,000 homes and businesses, according to *Jason Thune*, Hawaiian Telcom's VP, Fiber Strategy and Deployment. Maui is targeted for completion by the end of this year, and O'ahu and Hawai'i Island will be fiber-enabled by the end of 2026. The total cost of this statewide undertaking is projected to be \$1.7 billion, the majority of which is being financed by HT.

NAD FINDS ISSUES WITH SLING'S CUSTOMIZABLE TV CLAIMS

The **National Advertising Division** recommended that **Sling TV** either modify or discontinue certain website and video claims that suggest consumers can fully customize their channel lineup and only pay for the channels they choose. The decision follows a Fast-Track SWIFT challenge brought by **DirecTV**. NAD found that Sling doesn't offer a fully à la carte channel selection, though it does have a variety of choices and add-ons after choosing one of its base video packages. Sling said it will comply with NAD's recommendations. Sling's ads included phrases such as, "I wish my TV provider let me choose what I pay for. Sling lets you do that," and "Unparalleled flexibility. Control what channels you pay for and customize your channel lineup so that it's unique to you."

FCC'S HURRICANE PREP

In the hopes of furthering collaboration between communications providers, power companies and the public safety sector, the **FCC** will host a [hurricane season resiliency roundtable](#) in person and virtually on July 7. Topics include challenges for communications providers and electric utilities in coordinating and restoring service after a hurricane as well as speeding up recovery/minimizing damages to power and communications

infrastructure. Disaster recovery is one of the topics on tap for **SCTE Tech Expo** in D.C. Sept 29-Oct. 1, with execs from **Comcast**, **Charter** and **SCTE** set to tackle key risks that threaten infrastructure as well as SCTE standards to strengthen and operationalize effective planning strategies.

RATINGS

Fox News returned to its sweeping ways in the latest weekly cable ratings across primetime and total day. The news giant finished with 2.38 million viewers P2+ in prime from June 2-8. **ESPN** came second with 1.45 million and **MSNBC** third at 965,000. **TNT** and **CNN**, which are under a microscope upon this week's news of a **Warner Bros. Discovery** split, finished in the top five with 764,000 and 619,000, respectively. Fox News finished far in first for total day, posting 1.46 million. MSNBC climbed to second with 584,000, while ESPN finished the week at 506,000. Like in prime, TNT (425,000) and CNN (391,000) rounded out the top five. ESPN got help from the 2025 Women's College World Series reeling in a record 1.3 million viewers on average. The winner-take-all Game 3 of the WCWS title bout became the most-watched NCAA softball game ever, with Texas' win over Texas Tech averaging 2.4 million viewers Friday on ESPN. – **WWE's** first wrestling crossover event with newly-acquired Mexican lucha libre company **AAA** proved a success on **YouTube**. The "Worlds Collide" show, which pit WWE superstars against some of the best AAA luchadores, including one particularly hilarious guy who wrestled with an iguana puppet as a partner, peaked at 764,389 live concurrent viewers across WWE's English and Spanish-language YouTube channels. It's the largest live audience WWE has ever had on the video platform. More than 4.1 million viewers watched the video in the first 24 hours.

CARRIAGE

Pluto TV is teaming up with the **All Women's Sports Network** to create an AWSN FAST channel available across the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and the Nordics. AWSN will have a 24/7 linear stream available on Pluto, which will offer 2,500 hours of live women's sports per year in addition to on-demand programming. Live events include the new Athletes Unlimited Softball League, FIBA 3x3 and WNBL Basketball.

PROGRAMMING

RFD-TV is combining its FarmHER and RanchHER brands into one unified show called "FarmHER + RanchHER" when the programming returns for Season 7 later this year. The show spotlights women who are shaping the future of agriculture in rural America and gives a behind-the-scenes look at the role women play in preserving farmland and uplifting communities and families. RFD-TV is also launching a companion podcast. – The National Wrestling Alliance has signed a deal to stream matches on **The Roku Channel** starting on July 29. Matches will stream for free every Tuesday at 8pm.