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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

New FCC: Cable Rate Proceeding Pales Next to Broadcast Ownership

With an incoming **FCC** commissioner and a just-opened docket on relaxing broadcast media ownership rules, there is plenty to watch out for at the agency. But first up is Thursday's open meeting.

Not only will it be our first look at *Olivia Trusty* in the commissioner seat (she was sworn in Monday), but the agency is set to nix some cable rate regulations. **NCTA's** pleased by that move, but if the FCC proceeds to adopt the proposed draft and order that's on the table, it wants operators to be allowed to file a simplified rate calculation for basic service tier-only equipment and installation rates based on reasonable estimates for the associated capital, maintenance and installation costs. Under this simplified approach, the cable association said the operator could seek a ruling from the FCC on the reasonableness of its proposal in the "unlikely event" a local franchise authority (LFA) exercised rate regulation authority and the LFA and operator couldn't agree on a rate.

"This approach would be an alternative to filing the extremely complex and burdensome Form 1205. Form 1205 requires inputting data that is not readily available and not routinely kept in the manner assumed by the form, and is therefore burdensome to complete," NCTA said in a filing Friday with the FCC.

On the whole, NCTA would rather the FCC adopt a fundamental overhaul of rate regulation since it said it seems unlikely any widespread rate regulation will resume. In 2015, the FCC

adopted a presumption in favor of effective competition and another rate regulation exemption benchmark—that fewer than 30% of households in a franchise subscribe to cable—is met in many franchise areas today. Cable's share of occupied households has fallen from 41.6% in 2018 to 22.6% in March of this year, according to an NCTA analysis.

Broadcasters have also made a plea that it's time to revamp old rules, and FCC Chair *Brendan Carr* wasted no time responding now that he has a GOP majority. Just one day after Trusty's confirmation, the Media Bureau issued a public notice to refresh the record on whether broadcasters can own or control stations that in aggregate reach more than 39% of TV audience households in the U.S. The notice seeks to update a record that closed in April 2018. Among other things, it asks about overall video trends—including how the national audience cap affects broadcasters' position in relation to other video distributors, such as online video providers, that are not restricted by ownership limits.

Comments are due 25 days after publication in the Federal Register, but they're already trickling in. **One Ministries** raised concerns that relaxing ownership rules will decrease diversity of station ownership among religious organizations, minorities and women.

"Corporations such as **Nexstar** have already been gearing up to buy independent stations in anticipation of the FCC relaxing its ownership rules. They have already included language in their retransmission consent contracts regarding the carriage

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of additional stations that they purchase,” One Ministries said in its filing. A frequent proponent for expanded must carry, the religious broadcaster is using the proceeding to propose that the FCC create a way for religious, minority-owned, women-owned and other independent station operators to continue to reach local audiences by allowing them to gain must carry rights for Class A television stations.

A more surprising commenter came in the form of someone calling themselves “Century Egg Credit,” which filed a [parable](#) on the broadcaster and the shareholder. The gist of Egg’s comments is that localism is the key to broadcast consolidation: “By relaxing antiquated FCC ownership restrictions, broadcasters can amortize local investments across larger footprints, enabling sustainable reinvestment into differentiated, community-rooted content. The economics are finally aligned. Today’s digital toolkits, cloud production, multiplatform distribution (**YouTube**, FAST, OTT) and AI-enhanced editing have reduced local content costs by orders of magnitude. What once required million-dollar studios can now be achieved with smartphones and lean teams.”

Anticipating that an easing of broadcast regs might be in the works, members of the **American Television Alliance** (including reps from **DirecTV**, **Altice USA** and **ACA Connects**) met with FCC staffers earlier this month to espouse their continued objection to modifying or eliminating national ownership rules. “National broadcast consolidation increases broadcaster leverage in retransmission consent negotiations—resulting in higher retransmission consent rates. And MVPDs pass through some or all of these price hikes to their subscribers,” ATVA said in an ex parte describing the meeting. “Not only would this impact consumers’ wallets, it would ultimately harm broadcasters. When MVPDs raise prices, subscribers defect, often for streaming platforms that do not carry broadcasters.”

BEAD REVERBERATIONS

ALLO Communications, a regional ISP in Nebraska, is seeking to cut staff through a voluntary resignation program. In a June 20 memo obtained by Lincoln radio station KLIN, ALLO President/CEO *Brad Moline* wrote that capital limitations from investors and BEAD program delays have forced the operator to reduce spending. Employees have until noon on June 27 to volunteer, with their last day set for July 1. Moline also said “there may be a need for additional actions as we look to reduce our cash spend” following these voluntary cuts. – In Wisconsin, Gov. *Tony Evers* (D) is asking the State Legislature to approve \$400 million in the state’s Broadband Expansion Grant Program as BEAD 2.0

will effectively delay funding the state expects to receive. Evers’ office said Republican lawmakers during the 2023-25 biennial budget process rejected the \$750 million that was proposed to expand high-speed internet and approved \$0 in new state dollars to expand broadband instead, citing an influx of federal investments Wisconsin expected to receive. Wisconsin expected and planned to receive over \$1 billion through the BEAD Program with the state broadband office estimating that there are 262,000 locations that are considered unserved in Wisconsin as of December 2024.

THUNDER TAKE NBA CROWN

Game 7 of the **NBA** Finals was anticlimactic, for the most part (sorry, Pacers fans), but it still managed to reel in an average audience of 16.35 million viewers and a peak of 19.28 million from 9:45-10pm, per preliminary data from **Nielsen**. Despite the Pacers’ star player *Tyrese Haliburton* going down with an Achilles injury just seven minutes into the contest, this was still the most-watched NBA Finals game since 2019. The seven-game series averaged 10.27 million viewers across **ABC** and **ESPN+**, and the entire playoff average (34 games) for ESPN/ABC was 6.12 million. But the ratings don’t tell the entire story when it comes to how the NBA views a successful event or broadcast. *The Athletic* [writes](#) that Commissioner *Adam Silver* discussed why TV performance isn’t the only metric that should be used to measure the business side of things, even going as far as to say a leading streamer is “the most valuable pure play media company out there.” “Ratings have changed from what they used to be. **Netflix** is the most valuable pure play media company out there. Nobody in this room knows what their ratings are. We don’t even think in terms of ratings,” Silver told reporters. “We think maybe in terms of popularity, buzz around a program. We’re going through a transition, and we’re going to work through that.” While Netflix doesn’t have any rights to NBA games, it’s getting ready to release Season 2 of “Starting 5,” an NBA-tailored version of its previous (and popular) “Formula 1: Drive to Survive” series.

REVIVED PAC-12 INKS RIGHTS DEAL WITH CBS

It’s a new beginning for the **Pac-12 Conference**. The league is extending its media rights partnership with **CBS Sports** through the 2030-31 season, beginning with the upcoming 2025 college football campaign. That means CBS Sports will be the primary partner as the Pac-12 gets ready to bolster

itself with six new member schools before the 2026-27 season begins, though additional media partners will be announced at a later date. Plus, the Pac-12 continues to note that it will add “at least one more football-playing, all-sports member” to join ahead of the 2026-27 college sports calendar. Highlights from the new agreement include the annual Pac-12 football and men’s basketball championship games being broadcast on CBS and streamed on **Paramount+**. A minimum of three regular-season football games will also be on CBS and Paramount+, with men’s basketball also having the same stipulation. Games on CBS Sports Network will be revealed at a later date.

FOX FEELING CALIENTE (TV)

Fox Corp. acquired the Mexican sports broadcasting platform **Caliente TV**. Fox will soon develop a multi-platform business that’ll include the launch of a new Pay TV channel, as well as an SVOD platform that’ll join **Tubi**. The move also means Fox will obtain the rights to six **Liga MX** clubs, 10 Liga MX Women clubs, **CONCACAF** Champions Cup, **Premier League**, **FA Cup** and **UEFA** Champions League across Mexico. Additionally, *Carlos Martinez* will serve as EVP/Managing Director, Latin America. He’ll manage the overall Fox broadcasting strategy in Latin America and the transition of Caliente TV.

MEDIACOM TO MODERNIZE NETWORK WITH HARMONIC

Mediacom is using **Harmonic’s** cOS virtualized broadband platform to modernize its network, allowing the operator to provide multi-gig and symmetrical speeds as well as lower latency to customers. The operator says Harmonic’s Unified DOCSIS 4.0 tech creates a clear path to fiber, while lowering operating costs. The upgrade will be deployed in a distributed access architecture. Through this partnership, the operator says it aims to improve the performance and lifespan of its existing DOCSIS infrastructure. Mediacom serves over 3 million households and businesses across 22 states.

BROADBAND GRANTS FOR W VA

West Virginia Governor *Patrick Morrisey* (R) awarded \$34.6 million in grants to five ISPs deploying fiber in 10 counties in the state. Morrisey tapped into programs established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for the money, which will fund 362 miles of fiber construction in Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Grant, Jackson, Lewis, Mason, Pendleton, Preston, and Putnam counties. The operators receiving grants are **Citynet**, **Comcast**, **Digital Connections**, **Spruce Knob Seneca Rocks Telephone** and **Micrologic**.

SENATORS LOVE C-SPAN

Score one for **C-SPAN**. It’s not often the Senate passes something with unanimous bipartisan support, but last week the chamber passed a resolution honoring C-SPAN’s four decades of covering the Senate. It also urged all TV providers—including vMVPDs such as **YouTube TV**—to make the public affairs programmers’ networks available to their subscribers. The resolution was introduced by Senators *Chuck Grassley* (R-IA) and *Amy Klobuchar* (D-MN) and cosponsored by Sen. *Todd Young* (R-IN) and Sen. *Ron Wyden* (D-OR).

PROGRAMMING

For those who missed “Sinners” during its theatrical run, don’t fret. The horror film will be available to stream on **Max** starting July 4, followed by its linear debut on **HBO** on July 5 at 8pm. – The zombie apocalypse isn’t done with *Norman Reedus* just yet. His fan-favorite (and very broody) “The Walking Dead” character returns in “Daryl Dixon” Season 3, which is set to premiere on Sept. 7 at 9pm on **AMC** and **AMC+**. – Prequel series “Outlander: Blood of My Blood” just got an early Season 2 renewal ahead of its Season 1 premiere on Aug. 8 on **Starz**. – “Mobland” is the second most-watched original series on **Paramount+** with 26 million viewers to date, so it’s no surprise the crime drama has been renewed for Season 2. – **Great American Media** is expanding its faith-based original content offerings on the **Pure Flix** streaming platform. If you’re a premium subscriber, you can now access new interview series featuring Christian authors and celebrities as well as an inspirational program that combines personal stories with insights from Scripture.

PEOPLE

The results are in, and **NCTA** confirmed its board of directors after its latest annual elections. **Cox Communications** President *Mark Greatrex* was re-elected as Chairman, and fittingly, the Vice Chairman spot will remain with **Charter** President/CEO *Chris Winfrey*. **Comcast** President/CEO, Connectivity & Platforms and Senior EVP *Dave Watson*, **AMC Networks** CEO *Kristin Dolan*, **Midco** Chairman/CEO *Pat McAdaragh* and **General Communication** CEO/co-founder *Ron Duncan* were also among those re-elected to their respective positions. – **TEGNA** has three new VPs of Content, each of whom will oversee local stations in a dedicated geographic region: *Carol Fowler* in the Mid-South region, *Julie Wolfe* in the West and *Chris Peña* will look after the Midwest. Each will also look after a specific content focus, such as weather coverage, big stories and events and morning news strategy. – *Barry Goldstein* has been appointed the new CEO of connectivity infrastructure firm **Tillman Digital Cities**. He joins the company from **Arch Amenities Group**, where he also served as CEO.