TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025 VOLUME 36 | NO.153

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Stream Scene: Sling Unveils Skinny Bundle Ahead of Fox One, ESPN DTC Debuts

Video experimentation continues among the MVPDs, with this being the unofficial bundle shake-up week. A few days after unveiling its $4.99 day pass, **Sling TV** is launching live streaming option Sling Select. For $19.99 a month, subs get 11 channels—**Fox News, FS1, FX, National Geographic, NFL Network, LMN, Game Show Network, Grit, H&I, MeTV** and **Vice**. The service is Fox-heavy and launching just days ahead of **Fox One**, which doesn't seem to be a coincidence.

Fox One debuts Thursday for $19.99/month and includes all of Fox's linear channels as well as local stations. An extra $5/month adds SVOD **Fox Nation** to the bundle. In select markets where networks own stations (see chart), Sling subscribers will also receive local broadcast channels **ABC**, **NBC** and **FOX**, but they'll pay extra for the O&Os. It's $5 per month for markets with one or two local channels, and $10 per month for markets with all three.

"This should do well against kind of a Fox One entering the marketplace this week, but we took a little bit of a different approach" adding a mix of channels, *Seth Van Sickel*, SVP of Product and Operations at Sling TV, told ***CFX***. Plus, there's Sling's collection of FAST channels. Obviously, there are networks missing, like **CBS**, with Van Sickel noting that there are constant discussions with content players. "I think our goal is to get this out, understand what the customer sentiment is, and if customers tell us we need to change it, do something different—add channels, take a different viewpoint on it. That's how we learn and really what shapes what we build next," he said.

Last week, Sling introduced its Day Pass that lets viewers watch 24 hours of **ESPN**, **CNN**, **TNT**, **TBS** and other networks for about the same price as a Venti cold brew at Starbucks. There are also a weekend and week pass, priced at $9.99 and $14.99, respectively. The creative packaging raised our eyebrows, but we've heard of no pushback thus far. "Obviously, we understand our programming agreements well and everything we launched is within those rights, so that's where we're at," he said. "And we were obviously very excited to bring that level of flexibility. I think it's kind of a different take, not looking at the channel level, but it really drives an unprecedented level of flexibility from a how you buy perspective."

Programmers often get asked questions about cannibalizing content, but with Sling's new plans, it's now applicable to the vMVPD. Why subscribe to Sling Orange for $45.99 a month, when you can dive in for a couple of key weekends of games for

Stream live in these markets	abc	FOX	NBC
Atlanta	—	✓	—
Austin	—	✓	—
Boston	—	—	✓
Chicago	✓	✓	✓
Dallas	—	✓	✓
Detroit	—	✓	—
Fresno	✓	—	—
Gainesville	—	✓	—
Hartford	—	—	✓
Houston	✓	✓	—
Los Angeles	✓	✓	✓
Miami	—	—	✓
Milwaukee	—	✓	—
Minneapolis	—	✓	—
New York	✓	✓	✓
Oakland (San Francisco)	✓	✓	✓
Orlando	—	✓	—
Philadelphia	✓	✓	✓
Phoenix	—	✓	—
Raleigh-Durham	✓	—	—
San Diego	—	—	✓
San Francisco	✓	✓	✓
San Jose (San Francisco)	✓	✓	✓
Seattle	—	✓	—
Tacoma (Seattle)	—	✓	—
Tampa	—	✓	—
Washington DC	—	✓	✓

© 2025 Access Intelligence, LLC. Federal copyright law prohibits unauthorized reproduction by any means and imposes fines of up to $150,000 for violations.

ESPN, which launches its standalone DTC offering tomorrow. "I think for us it's about looking at where the market's going and how many customers every year we see just leave the category entirely. I think it's really about bringing customers back to the category," Van Sickel said. "We know the current subscription model of the pricing we have to charge is not working, and that's really across the ecosystem, because we are losing more customers to pay TV than obviously the streamers are picking up."

WHY IS NEXSTAR BUYING TEGNA?

FCC Chairman *Brendan Carr* and broadcasters alike have long been advocating for media ownership rules to be relaxed under a favorable *Trump* administration. That stance is about to be put to the test. **Nexstar**'s now-confirmed agreement to buy **TEGNA** (details in a separate item below) has been rumored for some time now as the legal landscape swings to an era of deregulation. Founder/CEO *Perry Sook* said the deal has been in the works for several months and signals the next chapter of Nexstar's growth story. "We can't bid for games on Christmas Day, or Thanksgiving night or any of the sort with a platform that is constricted by current regulations. We think [we're going to be] able to compete for content," Sook said during a conference call Tuesday morning. "We can advertise our national sales organization across a larger base of stations, which allows us to continue to have a robust sales effort. On the journalism side, the combined company will produce 450,000 hours annually of local content. That's meaningful. Everyone wants access to that content. Big tech would like that access without any meaningful compensation whatsoever." If it ultimately reaches the finish line, Nexstar will possess 265 full-power TV stations across 44 states and D.C. The combined organization would have stations in nine of the top-10 DMAs, 41 of the top 50 and 82 of the top 100, covering a total of 80% of U.S. TV households (and shattering the current 39% ownership cap). Nexstar already overlaps in 35 of TEGNA's 51 DMAs, though TEGNA brings Big-4 affiliates in key election markets like Phoenix, Atlanta and Toledo. That's something President/COO *Michael Biard* said should bolster opportunities in political advertising, particularly in even-numbered election years. There are going to be regulatory hurdles Nexstar and TEGNA must clear. Remember, TEGNA's proposed merger with **Standard General** two years ago fell apart after then-FCC Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* punted a review over to an administrative law judge, a decision many saw as a kiss of death. However, times have certainly changed in the 24+ months since, and Sook was complimentary of Carr and Trump recognizing "the need for meaningful regulatory relief," such as lifting the national ownership cap and revising in-market ownership rules. "We expect that all of those processes will move forward during the pendency of the transaction," Sook said. "We will work together with regulators as they consider modifying and repealing outdated rules and regulations, both at FCC and DOJ, or redefining either television or … the marketplace."

NEXSTAR-TEGNA DEAL DETAILS; ACA CONNECTS NOT A FAN

Media investors are carefully examining what the **Nexstar-TEGNA** merger means from Wall Street's standpoint, but MVPDs expect it'll mean higher retransmission consent bills. **ACA Connects** already issued a statement saying it's not thrilled with the news. The association said major broadcaster consolidation will result in more carriage disputes and increased monthly bills. "Large broadcasters like Nexstar and **Sinclair** already impose exorbitant retransmission consent fees, which have skyrocketed 2,000% since 2011. Now they are seeking a mega-footprint and even more leverage to reach deeper into people's pocketbooks," said ACAC President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer*. "The government should reject any unlawful combination that would be a raw deal for consumers." Look for plenty of others to weigh in, with **Newsmax**, **Free Press** and **Public Knowledge** among those raising concerns over 2018's scuttled Sinclair-Tribune merger. Subject to closing procedures, including TEGNA shareholder and regulatory approvals, the proposed Nexstar-TEGNA transaction should wrap up by 2H26. The definitive agreement would see Nexstar acquire all outstanding TEGNA shares for $22 per share in a cash transaction valued at $6.2 billion. The purchase price reflects a 31% premium to TEGNA's 30-day average stock price ending Aug. 8—the last closing stock price before media reports regarding a transaction began circulating. TEGNA's debt will be refinanced and/or assumed at close, with committed financing in place from **Bank of America**, **J.P. Morgan** and **Goldman Sachs** to fund the overall transaction. Nexstar expects to use excess free cash flow to repay the debt, a similar approach it's taken with its 2019 acquisition of **Tribune Media**, which cost north of $6 billion. Nexstar has since repaid $2 billion of that debt. Nexstar Founder/CEO *Perry Sook* said the deal is expected to be more than 40% accretive to the company's standalone adjusted free cash flow. The combined company is anticipated to generate $8.1 billion in net revenue and $2.56 billion in adjusted EBITDA, based on the reported results on an annualized basis for the previous eight quarters. Sook said that would put Nexstar's EBITDA in the same vicinity as **Fox** and **Paramount**. For context, the former posted $2.88 million in adjusted EBITDA for fiscal 2024 and $3.62 million for 2025. Paramount reports adjusted OIBDA and

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | SVP Media Group: Dave Colford, 631.786.9796, dcolford@accessintel.com | Sr Editor: John Saavedra, 908.477.1758, jsaavedra@accessintel.com | Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Account Executive: Harry Singh, 917.832.0064, hsingh@accessintel.com | Senior Director of Marketing / Brand Director, ScreenShift, CTV Connect: Stephanie Cronk, scronk@accessintel.com | Sr Production Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: $1,999.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

Cablefax
THE MAGAZINE

Cablefax
MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Nominations Now Open for Cablefax's Most Powerful Women

Early Bird Deadline	Final Deadline
August 22	September 17

Cablefax recognizes the Most Powerful Women based on their influence and power within the industry—as well as their commitment to ensuring other execs receive opportunities to grow and flourish. The Most Powerful Women awards and magazine recognize women across all departments including advertising, communications, corporate culture, sales, content, consultants, distribution, digital, finance, legal, operations and more. Help us celebrate women who are a beacon in a storm.

NOMINATE TODAY

www.CablefaxWomen.com

47446

has since finalized its own merger with **Skydance**, but delivered $3.12 billion last year and $2.39 billion two years ago. There's always the possibility that the deal never sees the light of day, something TEGNA is all too familiar with after the collapse of its deal with **Standard General**. Although that was under a *Biden* administration and former FCC Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* who weren't as keen on consolidation (but it's not totally off the cards now either—the *Wall Street Journal* reports **Sinclair** made an offer to merge its broadcast TV operations with TEGNA). If TEGNA were to walk away from the Nexstar agreement, including if it decides to merge with another group, it'll pay Nexstar $120 million. The regulatory termination fee Nexstar would have to pay TEGNA is slightly higher at $125 million. Sook said there's no go-shop period attached to the deal.

STARLINK CONTINUES TO MAKE BEAD CHALLENGES

As expected, **Starlink** parent **SpaceX** raised objections to Louisiana's final proposal for BEAD. "The State of Louisiana's Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program Final Proposal proposes to spend nearly $500 million dollars to provide connectivity to its unserved and underserved locations. SpaceX applied to serve virtually all BEAD households for less than $100 million dollars. As such, Louisiana's proposal includes over $400 million dollars in wasteful and unnecessary taxpayer spending," SpaceX said in comments due last week. It made similar arguments in its challenge to Virginia's final proposal, and it's likely to continue doing so. **New Street Research** expects **NTIA** will have states give satellite broadband more dollars, but not as much as SpaceX would like.

ESPN DTC BUNDLES NFL+ PREMIUM

When **ESPN**'s DTC streamer launches Thursday, customers will have the option to bundle the service with **Hulu** and **Disney+**, with an ESPN-**Fox One** bundle following in October. Now, add **NFL Network** and **RedZone** content as another combo offer via the $39.99/month ESPN Unlimited, **NFL+** Premium bundle, available from Sept. 3. ESPN Unlimited is priced at $29.99/month on its own and NFL+ Premium at $14.99/month, so the bundle will save customers about $5/month. **Disney** recently struck a deal with the NFL that will see ESPN take control of NFL Network, NFL Fantasy and RedZone, with the league getting a 10% equity stake in ESPN. The transaction is expected to close by the end of 2026, subject to regulatory approval. In other news, ESPN announced that Unlimited tier subscribers will be able to stream five out-of-market NFL preseason games on Aug. 23 via the ESPN App. Customers of select Pay TV providers will also have access to the games via authentication. ESPN's entire slate of NFL games will be available to stream through the DTC service.

DIRECTV LAUNCHES MIX CHANNELS

DirecTV's Signature Package and Genre Pack customers can now watch four live channels at once via a new multiview Mix Channels feature on the streaming platform. Seven channel mixes are now available, featuring four networks on one screen. Signature and MySports pack customers can access Sports Mix (**ESPN**, **ESPN2**, **FS1**, **NBC Sports**), League Sports Mix (**MLB Network**, **NBA TV**, **NFL Network**, **NHL Network**) and News Mix (**CNN**, **Fox News**, **Fox Weather**, **MSNBC**), which is available to MyNews and MyEntertainment subs as well. Signature and MyNews customers can also watch Business Mix (**Bloomberg TV**, **Cheddar News**, **CNBC**, **Fox Business**), while Signature and MyKids get the Kids Mix (**Disney Channel**, **Disney Jr.**, **Disney XD**, **Nickelodeon**). Signature, MySports and MyNews subs in select markets where the MVPD has the rights to stream **ABC**, **CBS**, **Fox** and **NBC** local stations can also tune in to Locals Mix. Sunday Sports Mix (CBS, Fox, ESPN and FS1) will be available on Sept. 7 for Signature and MySports customers. Mix Channels are available in the 910+ channel range and in the Your TV carousel on DirecTV Gemini devices, **Roku**, **Fire TV** and **Android TV**, with more platforms joining in the coming weeks. DirecTV satellite customers with compatible receivers will still have access to legacy mix channels as well as the new mixes through the DirecTV app.

OVBI: BROADBAND USAGE BUCKS SEASONALITY TREND

It's pretty typical for broadband usage to dip from 1Q to 2Q, with warm weather, vacations and other pursuits getting folks out of the house. But that may be changing. "For the first time in years, we saw the second quarter exceed the first quarter. It's slight, but still, it had been running between 5% and 10% lower traditionally from the first quarter to the second," **OpenVault** CEO *Mark Trudeau* told ***CFX***. The latest OpenVault Broadband Insights put the average per-subscriber usage for the 2Q25 at 664.2 GB—an increase of 1.0 GB over the 663.2 GB recorded in Q1 2025. What's more, the year-over-year growth rate in the quarter was higher than any seen in the second quarter in the past three years. The increase in average usage over 2Q24's 585.8 GB was 13.4%, the largest since a 14.0% rate of growth in 2021. The OVBI put downstream traffic up 13% YOY to 615.3 GB and upstream was up 17.9% to 48.9 GB. Other notable findings from the report include continued erosion of low-speed broadband tiers, with usage for those consumers on sub-50Mbps plans at 117.4 GB, a year-over-year decline of 55%. "There are just fewer and fewer subscribers on those low-bandwidth tiers as they're moving up to the faster tiers. A lot of those subscribers that operators are moving up to faster tiers are the higher users that really need more bandwidth anyway," Trudeau said. He'll discuss the findings and their implications for the industry on a webinar Sept. 10 at 11 a.m. EST.