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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Standoff: Crunch Time for YouTube TV as it Deals With Disputes

Carriage negotiations have taken a new complexion since **Charter** and **Disney**'s pact two years ago. The deal opened the door for traditional pay TV customers to get access to direct-to-consumer streaming services and revealed a blueprint for operators to use in a new—and odd—era of video. Now, it's the virtual distributors that are at a crossroads, as illuminated by **YouTube TV**'s developing conflicts on both the national and local level.

The vMVPD reached a short-term extension early Wednesday with **NBCUniversal** "to avoid disruption to our service while we work toward a new agreement." However, it's unclear how long the extension is good for, meaning events like top-ranked Ohio State vs Minnesota, Patriots vs Bills on Sunday Night Football and Boise State vs Notre Dame are still up in the air, along with "Saturday Night Live" and other NBCU programming.

TelevisaUnivision, meanwhile, didn't get the same result and saw its networks and local stations dropped from YouTube TV late Tuesday night. That includes cable nets like **TUDN** and **Galavision**, in addition to **Univision** stations. TU and YouTube TV's skirmish is over the provider's attempt to move the programming [from a basic tier](#) to a Spanish add-on option, which costs an additional \$14.99/month for users.

"TelevisaUnivision has over 160 million subscribers and billions of views across YouTube, where they generate ad revenue from their content. On our paid live TV subscription service,

YouTube TV, however, TelevisaUnivision only represents a tiny fraction of overall consumption," a YouTube spokesperson said in a statement to **CFX**. "Since we have not reached a new agreement with them, their content is no longer available on YouTube TV. We encourage viewers to continue watching TelevisaUnivision's content on their YouTube channels or on their streaming platform, **ViX**."

ViX, TU's streaming service, costs \$5.99/month with ads and \$8.99/month for the ad-free tier. Still, the loss of Univision adds pressure on YouTube TV from the U.S. Hispanic audience if NBCU-owned Telemundo is also on the chopping block, despite its temporary safety. TU also said it was "insult to injury" given the drop came during Hispanic Heritage Month.

"Google's actions are especially tone deaf and egregious on the eve of a potential government shutdown, disregarding the appeals of government officials and Hispanic organizations who urged them to keep Univision on the main bundle," TU said, referencing Sen. **Ted Cruz** (R-TX) [drawing attention](#) to the dispute on **X** and a letter sent to YouTube TV parent **Google** by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

TU holds the Spanish-language rights for the National League portion of the **MLB** Playoffs, which currently includes the L.A. Dodgers, San Diego Padres and Philadelphia Phillies, as well as the Chicago Cubs, Milwaukee Brewers and Cincinnati Reds. Given the large Hispanic audiences in L.A., San Diego and Philadelphia, the per-

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performances of those teams could tip the negotiating scale as more fans tune in for playoff baseball, and Univision has the Spanish-language rights to Game 1 of the World Series. It tips a lot more if local or state politicians begin to chime in. (For what it's worth, the Phillies, Dodgers and Brewers are among Vegas' favorites to win it all).

With TU dark and Telemundo in purgatory, viewers could be on the lookout for more stable ground. **Fubo** carries Telemundo nets but lost Univision in January. **DirectTV** offers both through its MiEspañol Genre Pack, which is currently running a deal for \$29.99/month for the first two months before increasing to its regular rate of \$34.99. It comes with a subscription to ViX's ad tier as well.

DirecTV is hoping to step up for customers in the cross-fire of a different YouTube TV-related dispute, albeit on a local level. At midnight, D.C.-area RSN **Monumental Sports Network** was [dropped from](#) YouTube TV and **Hulu + Live TV**. The dispute comes a week before the Capitals begin their season Oct. 8 in what could be *Alexander Ovechkin's* last season with the team. The Wizards begin their **NBA** campaign two weeks later on Oct. 22.

"We offered—and will continue to offer—both YouTube TV and Hulu numerous fair deals filled with economic concessions to keep our programming accessible, but neither platform meaningfully engaged with our proposals, and we never received a written counterproposal from either," Monumental Sports Network GM Friday Abernethy said in a statement.

Abernethy reiterated the notion of large digital companies like Google utilizing anticompetitive tactics to stifle independent regional networks. As Hulu + Live TV gets ready to merge with Fubo, it's worth noting Monumental has been dark on Fubo since June 2024. It's also evident YouTube TV doesn't view RSNs as a core piece of its strategy as things stand, since Monumental was one of the few remaining on the vMVPD.

Monumental is available on **Comcast/Xfinity**, **Verizon** and a litany of other local operators. It also has carriage on DirecTV and had a timely announcement Wednesday that it was added to the MyHome Team add-on that complements the MySports Genre Pack. MySports is running a similar deal to MiEspañol, going for \$59.99/month for the first two months following a five-day trial before upping to \$69.99/month. MyHome Team is an additional \$19.99/month and offers other RSNs like **Altitude Sports**, **Marquee Sports Network** and a handful of **FanDuel Sports Network** channels.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY GAINS FOR HOME INTERNET, SET-TOP DEVICES

The big announcement shared at the top of the energy summit at **TechExpo** was that **T-Mobile** has joined the Small Network Equipment Voluntary Agreement (SNE VA), which has expanded its scope to include the fixed wireless sector. That expansion will add 13 million subs to the reach of the agreement, which was extended to 2028. The agreement is an industry initiative that drives energy-efficiency improvements for home internet devices, including broadband modems, routers and WiFi extenders. Part of that effort includes its annual [report](#), which was released today and shows that average energy use of new SNE devices declined by 89% relative to increasing broadband speeds in 2024. The Set-Top Box Voluntary Agreement, also extended through 2028, released its [annual report](#) for 2024 as well, revealing that the national energy footprint of these devices decreased by nearly 75% compared to 2012 levels—from 32 TWh down to 8.6 TWh. Consumers also spent \$2.85 billion less on utility bills and there were 15.7 million fewer metric tons of CO2 emissions from power plans in 2024 than there would have been if power levels and volume of set-top boxes remained unchanged from 2012, when this agreement was established. News of T-Mobile, the nation's largest FWA provider, joining SNE VA and the release of the reports were met with cheers at the energy summit Wednesday morning, but attendees were told not to post anything about the announcements on LinkedIn until the press release went out later that morning. From what we can tell, no one spoiled the surprise.

TECHEXPO ENERGY SUMMIT ZOOMS IN ON AI

Surprise! Artificial intelligence was all the rage at the Energy 20/20 Summit held on the final day of **SCTE TechExpo25**. Agentic AI, machine learning and automation were consistent talking points across the three days of the show, but at Wednesday's summit, it was the HVAC and network cooling discussions that brought the heat, highlighting how operators are leveraging AI for the future of network energy efficiency. **Cox Communications** Senior Critical Facilities Engineer *Ruben Ruiz* talked about a machine learning model he developed that helps control, monitor and predict the best way to operate HVAC equipment, leading to a reduction in power consumption at critical facilities. **Comcast** Director of Software Development & Engineering *Zac Pepin* said

that the operator has launched in all regions a new machine learning function called temperature pattern detection that tracks anomalies in temperature across its network, allowing field teams to respond to potential issues as quickly as possible. “Our best use case, we had a 39-minute lead start,” said Pepin. “If something’s not looking right and we notify the field teams, they can go and take action and ideally prevent outages.” The network cooling discussion looked at the shift from air to liquid cooling solutions at data centers, as increasing AI demand raises the temp. That talking point inevitably led to a question about what panelists think about water consumption as it relates to keeping data centers cool. “If you’re not measuring what you’re using, then you’re not doing it right,” responded *Richard Anderson*, National Sales Manager for Data Centers at **Siemens**. “Measurements and the analytics piece and really making sure you are a responsible steward of the resources as a data center or an operator, that’s everything.”

PLAY IT SAFE

Lawmakers are looking to help put up some guardrails around name, image and likeness and the new era of college athletics. This week, Sens. *Maria Cantwell* (D-MA), *Cory Booker* (D-NJ) and *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) introduced the Student Athlete Fairness and Enforcement (SAFE) Act. The bill would “codify athletes’ rights and protections in law, expand revenue for all schools, support women’s and Olympic sports and bring much-needed stability to the college sports system.” Another aspect of SAFE would be amendments to the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 which exempts professional sports leagues from antitrust laws and enables organizations to pool together media rights and sell them as a collective offering. The hope is to have that antitrust exemption apply to college sports as well, in addition to establishing a committee that determines fair distribution of media rights and ensures all schools can maintain scholarship and roster slots for women’s and Olympic sports.

ESPN MAKES ANOTHER SIX-YEAR RIGHTS RENEWAL

The mid-major conferences continue to get some love from **ESPN**. The network signed a six-year rights extension with the **Ohio Valley Conference** [last week](#), and now it’s doing the same with the **Big South Conference** in a deal that goes through 2030-31. Over 800 Big South events will be carried by ESPN platforms per year. The league’s men’s basketball tournament championship will air on either ESPN or **ESPN2**, while the women’s title game will be on **ESPNU**. ESPNU will have six Big South events per season, coming in the form of a minimum of four men’s hoops broadcasts and at least two more linear opportunities on ESPNU or **ESPNEWS**. Similar to the OVC, the

Big South retains the rights to telecast up to 50 linear events per year locally within its footprint. Those telecasts will be on ESPN+ as well. ESPN+ will continue to have all regular-season and Big South postseason championship broadcasts.

CLOSING TIME IN D.C.

You know the government is officially shut down when the **FCC**’s daunting red banner displays on the agency’s [website](#). The Commission already [mapped out how](#) it was approaching the looming shutdown, but now that it’s official, “the FCC has suspended most operations” due to the lapse in federal funding. Congress couldn’t get a deal done, with the central debate topic being healthcare subsidies. Lawmakers return to the Hill on Friday, so it’ll be at least a couple of days until federal offices turn their lights back on.

RATINGS

Add more ratings accolades to the **Fox News** trophy case. The network won the latest quarterly cable ratings race across primetime and total day among P2+, recording an average of 2.48 million and 1.57 million viewers, respectively, throughout 3Q25. **ESPN** came second after finishing with 1.49 million viewers in prime and 658,000 in total day, while **MSNBC**’s primetime average was 802,000 and 492,000 for total day. September’s ratings saw the same order in both categories as Fox News (2.5 million and 1.61 million), ESPN (2.52 million and 938,000) and MSNBC (810,000 and 507,000) maintained their normal spots among the top of ratings. **Fox Business** won market-hour ratings (weekday 9am-4pm), scoring 215,000 viewers compared to **CNBC**’s 157,000. Weekday total day viewership fell in Fox Business’ favor as well with 132,000 over 97,000.

CARRIAGE

Mediacom has launched **Family Entertainment Television**’s two networks **FETV** (Family Entertainment Television) and **FMC** (Family Movie Classics) across its footprint. The channels are available in the Variety TV package. FETV caters to classic TV fans, with its current lineup featuring series such as “Emergency!,” “The Jeffersons” and “The Munsters,” which all run in their original, uncut form. FMC features classic films, with October featuring a “Fade to Black” programming special, celebrating the film noir genre with titles including “The Maltese Falcon” and “The Big Sleep.”

PEOPLE

The **American Association for Public Broadband** is adding *Joshua Edmonds* to its Board of Directors. Edmonds is currently the CEO of Cleveland-based nonprofit ISP **DigitalC**, which recently added Detroit to its footprint.



Scenes from TechExpo25 Show Floor

The show floor at SCTE TechExpo 25 was big and bustling, totaling 85,369 square feet, up from 84,780 in 2024. It saw a steady stream of foot traffic across the event's three days.

Amid all the antennas, vaults and fiber optics on display, Harmonic constructed a Broadband Land booth with a Candyland theme. It had a steady flow of foot traffic, thanks partly to the sugary concoctions it was serving up alongside demos of the latest advancements to the cOS virtualized broadband platform. Candy, ice cream and a converged solution for multi-gigabit services that Comcast is deploying to expand its network. Harmonic tied it all together with the tagline: "The sweetest part is still to come."



While Harmonic was sweet, AOI was spicy. Not only does the company make advanced optical devices, it produces its own hot sauce. Really. As far as we know, you can only get their four blends—Packet Loss Pete, 279 Standard, Ingress Inferno and Coaxial Combustion—at a trade show. And they aren't just giving out free bottles and samples (warning, we hear Coaxial Combustion is so hot, it will burn your skin). If you ever wished for a "Hot Ones"-style TV show of cable professionals eating hot sauce and performing tasks such as connectorizing both ends of a .500 cable and .500 pin connector, AOI is delivering with its ["Spicy Splice" YouTube series](#).



CommScope showed off its latest DOCSIS and PON advancements at its booth, but it also showed off its need for speed at a separate display on the other side of the floor. Anyone passing by The Continuum stage likely got a look at an F1 car, highlighting the company's multi-year agreement to be the official connectivity partner of the MoneyGram Haas F1 Team. There was also a chance to win a CommScope swag bag by taking a pic of the car or the booth and posting it on LinkedIn with a special hashtag.



Speaking of The Continuum, the exhibit and stage presented by NCTA and powered by CableLabs offered a tour through the past, present and future of connectivity as well as the policies that have shaped telecommunications. On display from the Breen Technical Archives at The Cable Center was an early line amplifier made out of a Folger's coffee can as well as the TelePrompter SpaceCast One Model portable dish that powered the first domestic satellite TV transmission in 1973 at that year's NCTA Cable Show. There was also a display showing how WiFi tech is supporting American jobs as well as deep dives into immersive entertainment, including a virtual reality demo from HTC, and the future of AI-powered network infrastructure. The sleek Continuum stage itself hosted livestreamed discussions throughout the expo.



Think about that for a minute...

Definitions

Commentary by Steve Effros

This isn't going to be an easy column to write. I'm sure the publishers of this newsletter don't want to get embroiled in the political battles we are witnessing today, for obvious reasons. I don't blame them. But I'm a long-time "First Amendment nerd." What's currently happening has immense significance for the viability of that Amendment and freedom of speech, on all "sides" in the future. It needs to be discussed. I'll try to stay out of the polemics, however.

Many, many years ago I wrote a thesis paper asking the question, "Is the law of libel falling into an obscene trap?" It was all about the First Amendment and who, and how "legal" or "illegal" speech could be defined. Two major Supreme Court actions had just come down in 1964. The first was *New York Times v. Sullivan*, where the Court unanimously decided that, regarding "defamation" of public officials, libel laws could not inhibit the First Amendment "free speech" rights of newspapers (and other speakers) unless "actual malice or willful disregard of false statements" could be proved. Simply publishing (or saying) something that turned out to be incorrect was insufficient grounds for a defamation action to succeed. The problem, of course, is that the terms "actual malice" and "willful disregard" leave a lot of room for definition.

The other case was actually famous for an explanation by one of the Justices. It was a case about whether a movie violated an earlier Supreme Court explanation of what "obscenity" is, which they said did not get First Amendment protection under what was known as the "Roth test." That test was defined by Justice Brennan in the earlier Roth case as "...Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the material appeals to a prurient interest in sex, and whether the material was utterly without redeeming social value." In the 1964 case, the Court decided that the movie at issue was protected, with Justice Potter Stewart famously stating that he actually could not define hard core pornography, but "...I know it when I see it!" That explanation has echoed through the decades of First Amendment law.

Why go through all this? Well, we're now seeing what the

potentially fatal flaw is in governmental restraints based on "...I know it when I see it" logic. It all depends on who has the power to define what is being viewed, heard, etc. If satire, for instance, is now viewed by the folks in power as being disruptive of public order, or something "threatens national security," then they believe they can take action against it. It doesn't really matter if, at the end of the day, the Courts agree or not. The mere taking of government action or the threat of it can disrupt, detain, bankrupt or potentially destroy an individual or business. The First Amendment protections lose meaning.

Put in simpler terms, our current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has explained that he sees his job as simply calling "balls and strikes" with regard to the law and the Constitution. But if the "pitcher" is defining what the size of "home plate" is, and can change it at will, then the Court becomes irrelevant. That's where it looks like we are headed right now. The "equal branches of government" are no longer equal. Thus, on the quintessential issue that has to be the focus of anyone involved in telecommunications, either providing it or using it (which means all of us), protecting the viability of our First Amendment rights should be paramount.

Yes, today, some will retreat to the "liberal" and "conservative" corners and argue. But the results are bad in the long run whichever "side" you are on, because if we allow one or the other "side" to exclusively define the words, we're all, eventually, in trouble.



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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