

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Big Turnout: MSNBC, Spectrum News, Free Channels Post Wins on Election Night

Democrats are having a moment after Tuesday night's election wins, and so are the news networks, be they FAST, linear or regional.

MSNBC, which will soon be rebranded as MSNow under **Versant Media**, led the cable nets on Tuesday with 3.04 million viewers in primetime, according to **Nielsen's** preliminary ratings, just beating **Fox News**, which averaged 2.85 million viewers. **CNN** came in third with 1.78 million, but led in the 25-54 demo, averaging 574,000, followed by MSNBC with 490,000 and Fox News with 448,999.

There's more to the story than the big cable nets. Fresh off being featured in "SNL's" [opener](#) Saturday, networks, including CNN, turned to **Charter-owned Spectrum News NY1** for coverage of **Zohran Mamdani's** win of the NYC mayoral race.

SNL's cold open poked fun at NY1, calling it the city's "Number five" news station. Debate moderator *Errol Louis* was portrayed by *Kenan Thompson*, who quipped that the NY1 political anchor was the least famous person to ever be impersonated on SNL. But the jokes don't tell the true story. Among Spectrum subs in NYC, NY1 consistently ranks first in full-day local news share. On Election Day, visits to Spectrum News digital platforms in NYC more than doubled compared to the prior 28-day average. This boost was led by the NY1 website, followed by the mobile and CTV apps. Total livestream hours increased 8.5x on the website, 3.5x on the mobile app

and 2.2x on the CTV app.

Charter has doubled down on its regional news networks, launching new channels this year in Georgia, Alabama and Michigan as well as the Spanish-language **Spectrum Noticias**. And it is increasingly expanding access beyond the linear networks. NY1 provided free access to its election coverage on the Spectrum News app and other streaming platforms during major events, including debates and Election Day. *Sam Singal*, Group VP, News and Content, Spectrum News, told **CFX** that the move was "crucial for empowering our community with the information they need to make informed decisions." The news net's also making efforts to grow its reach and build awareness online. Singal said that NY1 "dramatically increased our presence on digital and social platforms, posting more often and with more care on platforms like Instagram."

Of course, NY1 isn't the only news channel expanding its coverage to digital platforms beyond traditional Pay TV. Several networks have launched FAST channels aimed at cord-cutters and cord-nevers who want to stay informed, and they were busy on Election Night. **CNN Headlines**, for example, programmed clips from the news net's election coverage on FAST platforms as well as the brand's new DTC streamer, while **ABC News Live**, **CBS News 24/7** and **LiveNOW from Fox** also had nonstop coverage, including live results and analysis from the pundits.

Notably, **NBC News Now** had multiple election streams going on **YouTube**, including one [solely focused](#) on analyst *Steve Kornacki*, who has quite a sizable following online. NBC



WREATHS
— across —
AMERICA

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News Now's main election night stream had 378,000 views on YouTube as of deadline, while the "Kornacki Cam" delivered 520,000. It was one of the free channel's top 10 days this year on YouTube in terms of hours viewed. Meanwhile, in primetime, NBC News Now delivered its second-largest audience this year, behind only Trump's Presidential Address in March.

WBD SETS DECEMBER DEADLINE

CNBC reports that **Warner Bros. Discovery** will announce in "middle or end of December" whether it will sell the entire company, only sell some of its assets or proceed to split into two separate entities as originally planned. The December deadline comes following the company's announcement that it had initiated a strategic review to weigh its options, including multiple offers from **Paramount Skydance** to buy the entire company. So far, WBD has rejected PSKY's advances amid rumors that **Netflix** and **Comcast** are also interested in making bids for the media giant's studio and streaming businesses. According to CNBC, Paramount has sent WBD's board several letters arguing that its latest bid—\$23.50 a share, an 80% cash and 20% equity offer, per the outlet—creates the most value for WBD's shareholders. PSKY would consider making a hostile bid, bringing an offer directly to shareholders if the board decides to go in a different direction, said CNBC.

SINCLAIR CEO SUGGESTS CREATING TWO BROADCAST BEHEMOTHS

Broadcasters are waiting with anticipation as the **FCC** ponders changes to ownership rules. **Sinclair** is among those who think the industry is on the right trajectory toward "a more constructive M&A environment," and with linear TV's challenges hanging in the backdrop, it leaves an opportunity for large-scale consolidation beyond **Nexstar** and **Tegna**. During its 3Q25 earnings call Wednesday, Sinclair said it expects the FCC to raise or eliminate the 39% national ownership cap in 1H26. President/CEO **Chris Ripley** called it an inflection point where scale and operational efficiency will divide high-performing companies from the rest of the industry, but instead of leaving it at that, he suggested another mega-merger similar in scale to the proposed Nexstar-Tegna deal announced in August. "One potential path for industry evolution could involve consolidating into two similarly sized [and] scaled broadcast groups, creating another group comparable in size to the large broadcast combination announced in August," Ripley said, adding that

it would unlock "an estimated \$600-900 million in annual synergies" through mergers and subsequent portfolio optimizations. Sinclair has been open about entering a strategic review of its broadcast business a few months ago, and it remains active in finding possible deals that could improve value for shareholders. Total revenue for the quarter dipped by 16% YOY to \$773 million, though that surpassed the high end of Sinclair's guidance range. Quarterly media and distribution revenues were on the higher end of guidance despite showing YOY declines at \$765 million and \$422 million, respectively, driven by improved subscriber churn and better-than-expected core advertising revenue. Speaking of, total advertising revenue was \$321 million. Company leadership predicts a record midterm "based on current pacing and early conversations with political buyers," according to COO/President, Local Media **Rob Weisbord**. It expects political ad revenue to at least equal the \$333 million record for a midterm year set back in 2022. Races Sinclair has its eyes on include a Senate race in North Carolina, a gubernatorial contest in Nevada and races across Ohio, Texas, Michigan and Maine. And it's already thinking about the 2028 presidential election, since it's slated to be the first dual open presidential primary since 2016.

FUBO OFFERS CENTRAL HUB FOR INGESTED STREAMERS

One of the ways streaming platforms like **Prime Video** and **YouTube** have addressed fragmentation is by offering a centralized location where users can access other subscriptions without having to leave the app. **Fubo** joined them Wednesday and introduced its own option called the "Fubo Channel Store." It features the ingested direct-to-consumer services that Fubo carries, including **Paramount+ with Showtime, Starz, MGM+, Hallmark+, DAZN** and **FanDuel Sports Network**. **The Fubo Channel Store is open to non-Fubo subs as well**, though those who subscribe to any of the standalone plans can access the vMVPD's FAST channel collection Fubo Free.

WOW! TALKS COMPETITION

WOW! isn't commenting on its quarterly earnings since it's about to go private, but it talked about the current competitive landscape during a six-minute call Wednesday. It was timely after **WOW!** lost 4,900 HSD customers in 3Q25. Since **WOW!** is a challenger brand, CEO **Teresa Elder** noted that its primary competitors in legacy markets have been **Comcast**

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In The WILD

A Cablefax feature highlighting industry doings spotted in the real world.

Political Advertisements

Political advertising has produced some memorable moments in media—whether they're good, bad or infamous. Every election cycle brings a fresh wave of commercials that may or may not resonate with viewers, but when Election Day passes, TV viewers across the U.S. no longer have to endure the onslaught of campaign-sponsored spots. At least for a few months.

This year's cycle certainly wasn't as active as a year ago, but there were some high-profile races that generated noise. New York City's mayoral seat was up for grabs, New Jersey and Virginia had governor races and California voted on a redistricting measure. Even if you're not living in those jurisdictions, you likely still got a fix of political ads through national campaigns.

With Tuesday in the rearview mirror, it got **CFX** thinking about some of the memorable political spots we've seen:

I think the only political ad I have ever remembered was from 1992. Every Georgian alive at that time can probably still hum the jingle today. The [television spot](#) begins with 73-year-old Margie Lopp sitting in a swing and singing, "Let's put Paul Coverdell in the Senate and put Wyche Fowler out." It was campy even for the 1990s, but surprisingly catchy. And there's even a loose cable tie. Coverdell won that race, and eventually Kyle McSlarrow served as his Chief of Staff. McSlarrow became President/CEO of NCTA in 2005 and during his tenure he tapped Republican political consultant Fred Davis to create a multi-media campaign for the association called "Cable: A Great American Success." Davis was behind Coverdell's ads after he was elected, but when we asked if he created the Margie Lopp spot, he responded, "I wish." No one seems to have a clue who was behind it, though there's some unsubstantiated lore [here](#) that jives with Davis' memories. "I recall Paul telling me she did the song herself, and someone just filmed it with that era's equivalent of a cell phone, so it's possible no one 'did it,' and they just ran it sorta raw," he said. For the record, Davis was behind another memorable political ad—Carly Fiorina's "[Demon Sheep](#)" spot. – Amy Maclean

With apologies to my friends and colleagues, I don't know if I'll ever get the "I am speaking!" commercial out of my head. Those in Virginia might've seen Governor-elect Abigail Spanberger's [ad](#) that rolls a clip of her opponent, Winsome Earle-Sears, saying those words at an event in Buena Vista. Even the smallest soundbites can unfold into a viral moment—or something I repeat until who knows when. But beyond this year's elections, it's hard to forget former President Barack Obama [featured](#) Big Bird from "Sesame Street" in a 2012 ad in his campaign against Mitt Romney. Creative points go to George W. Bush's [windsurfing spot](#) in the 2004 presidential race. – Noah Ziegler



and **Charter**. Like others, it's seeing heightened competition from fixed wireless players, though Elder added 3Q25 saw WOW! improve its HSD ARPU while bringing churn to a record low. It's a different story in the company's greenfield markets. WOW!'s greenfield footprint reached 106,000 after adding more than 15,000 homes in 3Q25. "And the penetration keeps growing at a robust rate. We're maintaining that 16% in greenfield, even though we're adding so many homes," she said, also noting WOW!'s edge-out strategy that enabled it to add another 3,700 addresses across its legacy footprint. WOW!'s 3Q25 total revenue came in at \$144 million, an 8.9% decline YOY. HSD revenue fell by .8% to \$106.6 million, and net loss reached \$35.7 million.

TELEvisaUNIVISION HIGHLIGHTS 'IGNORED' HISPANIC VOTERS

A poll commissioned by **TelevisaUnivision** found that Hispanic voters are being overlooked by political ads. According to a survey conducted in October, 71.1% of 1,000 likely Hispanic voters polled said they had not yet seen or heard any political ads in Spanish from major parties or their candidates ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Only 18.2% said they did, while 10.8% were unsure. TU tied these findings back to its current blackout on **YouTube TV**, sounding the alarm on how it's limiting access to Spanish-language news and programming for millions of Hispanic viewers, including those likely to vote. According to the Pew Research Center, Hispanics now account for over 14% of the U.S. electorate, up from 9% in 2008. Notably, 49% of respondents said candidates who communicate in Spanish are more in touch with their communities, yet only 20.5% believe campaigns are making enough of an effort to reach them in Spanish. TU said that it not only has the support of President Trump but also 10 state attorneys general as well as numerous Hispanic orgs, all urging a resolution to the carriage dispute with YouTube.

VICE TV STEPPING INTO THE RING

Vice TV will be the exclusive U.S. linear home of 10 of the Professional Fighters League's upcoming international MMA events from the MENA and Africa regions. The deal begins with the MENA Championships airing on Dec. 5, followed by the Africa Championships on Dec. 20, with eight more telecasts to come in 2026. The net will also offer viewers a free VOD library of 50 hours of PFL content from the regions.

FIBER FRENZY

Zipty Fiber fired up service for more than 1,300 addresses in McCall, Idaho. The company plans to build over 4,500 total across the city, with construction for the remaining locations continuing over the next several months.

Think about that for a minute...

YouTube Dominoes

Commentary by Steve Effros

We've all at least watched a video of a line of dominoes falling against each other as the entire line collapses. You know what's going to happen; the only part you don't know is which domino is going to go first, and which way it's going to fall. I'm getting that same feeling right now with the video content production and distribution business. Us.

One of the most important variables that has been introduced into the "production and distribution" line is YouTube. As we all should know, YouTube is owned by Google, so we're not talking about a new or small player here. We're talking about a Goliath. And which way it decides to turn, push or drop is going to make a huge difference to the entire video market and all of the various pieces. There are no exceptions; the existing distribution market of broadcasters, cable/satellite and streaming channels, as well as the established content production houses, the new "content creators," the actors, directors, "Tech" folks and most major sports franchises.

As an [article](#) in *The Hollywood Reporter* recently pointed out, the fact that YouTube spent \$2 billion for the rights to show the NFL Sunday Ticket games is a harbinger of major things to come. It showed its first national live game in September, and the NFL has made clear it would love to add YouTube as a new bidder for the rights to more games. Those are big, expensive dominoes. The problem is we don't really know which way all those dominoes are going to fall, but fall they will.

YouTube recently became the most-watched media company providing video content on television screens. Disney (ABC, ESPN, etc.) is second, then comes Netflix, NBC, Paramount and Fox. In other words, the long-standing question of who is going to "own" the home screen is becoming clear. It was originally thought to be a battle between "televisions" and "computers." No longer. Those two things have essentially combined. Now it's a question of which business plan will survive the increasingly expensive and difficult marketplace challenge of attracting and keeping viewers. Do you continue to be a creator of video products or do you move to a new

business model and let someone else do it? If you have both distribution and production capabilities and finances, you may have to ultimately decide which way to "fall."

Paying for "top" product was easy when there were few competitors. But then came cable, satellite, internet streaming and everyone has "gone digital." So the competition exponentially increased. The result: the "stickiest" programming—sports, and particularly football—became the "Golden Egg" along with the highest priced original programming that was only produced by a few "big" players.

The bidding wars among the video distributors have resulted in some eye-popping numbers. HBO and then Netflix were first out of the gate paying top dollar and becoming known for the highest quality. Now the prices for major sports deals are getting unmanageable. Total program content spending is now seeing numbers like \$37 billion last year for No. 1, Comcast, and YouTube being No. 2 with \$32 billion.

But this is where things get really confusing. In most cases, YouTube has a different business model. They are paying "content creators" who own and market their own products, then sharing ad revenue, unlike the traditional folks who finance and "own" the subscription content they are showing. The risk capital is moving away from the distributor onto the creator. That's going to be a major change in the game... that is, the "dominoes" in terms of who wins and who loses are going to fall in a different direction. We already know that

the broadcasters and traditional channels are being stressed. Which way will the dominoes fall? More next column.



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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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