

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Final Frontier: Verizon Clears Major Hurdle in Ongoing Merger

After 16 public hearings, 500 comments, several testimonies and a number of settlements, the **California Public Utilities Commission** ended a years-long process Thursday when it voted to approve **Verizon** and **Frontier Communication's** \$20 billion merger. CPUC stood as one of the [few remaining obstacles](#) for the deal to cross the finish line, with the **FCC** having given the thumbs up last May—shortly after Verizon pledged to end its DEI initiatives. The transaction is expected to close Tuesday.

The DEI rescission was a focal point in CPUC balking at the deal. Some of Verizon's changes raised concerns that they would conflict with existing California laws. However, an Administrative Law Judge ruled that the company's commitments could be consistent with state regulations if additional promises and requirements are made. On the other side, Verizon expressed worry about mandates tied to broadband deployments, workforce and supplier contracts.

Regarding DEI, while CPUC couldn't force Verizon to reinstall previous programs, it believes it found ways to balance the scales of FCC authority and state policies. "The elimination of the company's programs supporting our state's diversity goals sits on one side of the scale, and when there's harm on one side, the law requires a weight on the other side to justify approval," CPUC Commissioner *John Reynolds* said during the voting meeting. "We secured additional conditions in this decision to counter those harms. We couldn't mandate

that Verizon restore its former programs, but we could build accountability mechanisms and require investment in California and our diverse communities."

Thursday's vote saw the adoption of settlements between Verizon and California state entities. Verizon will deploy fiber to 75,000 new locations within five years, prioritizing census blocks with household incomes at or below 90% of the county median. The wireless operator will build 250 new cell sites with both 5G and fixed wireless capabilities in areas that are eligible for state broadband grants and high fire threat districts. To back those commitments, Verizon agreed to a \$150 million performance bond and committed to a \$20/month broadband program for eligible low-income households for the next 10 years. California is requiring Verizon spend \$300,000 annually for advertisements "so that eligible customers actually learn that these programs exist."

Verizon's deployment requirements include broadband capable of 100 Mbps/20 Mbps to 88 wire centers. It'll have seven years to complete the buildout with interim milestones at Years 3 and 5. The company can apply for state grants to offset projects in high-cost areas. For those in high fire threat areas, Verizon will need to offer 72-hour battery backup at no charge. Customers outside of those areas will get 24-hour backup.

Verizon agreed with the California Emerging Technology Fund to devote \$40 million for digital inclusion, with the goal of connecting 100,000 unconnected households. Approximately \$35 million will go toward closing the state's digital divide, while \$5



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million will be used in grants to community-based organizations and schools. Additionally, Verizon will spend \$500 million with small businesses over the next five years via the company's small business accelerator initiative.

On the workforce front, Verizon will hire at least 600 new union-represented employees over six years. Existing union workers will get four years of layoff protection. Verizon will also enter a \$10 million partnership with the California State University system for workforce development, in addition to creating recruiting pipelines from the CSU network—which has 470,000 students in total—and other educational institutions that serve underrepresented communities.

Other agreements include tribal liaisons for Northern and Southern California. They will be full-time employees who will have the authority to direct company resources and access to executive leadership. Within two years, Verizon will have to provide tribes with maps of infrastructure in and around ancestral territories, in addition to sending welcome letters to tribal leaders explaining the services that are available.

Verizon will be on the hook for an independent compliance monitor to ensure the company follows through on settlements. Those responsibilities entail annual reporting on every major commitment, while directing CPUC staff to develop an enforcement program with citation authority for violations. “We’re not simply trusting that Verizon will do what it has promised. We’re building the compliance infrastructure to hold them accountable,” Reynolds said.

VERIZON OUTAGE AFTERMATH

The great **Verizon** network outage of 2026 is over. The operator took its licks from customers and [the competition](#) after a major disruption Wednesday left many Americans without a cell signal to call or text. In a statement [posted](#) on X Thursday, Verizon apologized for the snafu, acknowledging it “did not meet the standard of excellence you expect and that we expect from ourselves.” A software issue is being blamed for the headaches. Engineers worked for hours to fix the outage, with the operator finally announcing that the issue had been resolved at 10:20pm ET, more than nine hours after it acknowledged the problem on X. Verizon is offering a \$20 account credit to affected customers, who will receive a text message when the credit is available. They’ll have to log into the myVerizon app to claim the discount. Business customers will be contacted directly about their credits. “This credit isn’t meant to make up for what happened. No credit really can. But it’s a way of acknowledging our customers’ time and showing that this matters to us,” Verizon said in a statement.

PSKY HITS SNAG IN WBD LAWSUIT

Delaware Chancery Court judge *Morgan T. Zurn* rejected **Paramount Skydance**’s motion to expedite [its lawsuit](#) against **Warner Bros. Discovery** demanding the company be more transparent about why it chose **Netflix**’s offer. That includes releasing additional information about how it’s valuing the cable side of the business, which is set to spin off as **Discovery Global** prior to the close of the Netflix for Streaming & Studios. In her dismissal of the motion, Zurn said that PSKY did not suffer “irreparable harm” from WBD not disclosing additional information about the deal. PSKY was hoping to speed up the case before its tender offer expires on Jan. 21. The company said it will continue to push WBD to disclose more details about its agreement with Netflix.

T-MOBILE TOPS J.D. POWER NETWORK QUALITY STUDY

To add to **Verizon Wireless**’ bad week, **T-Mobile** was ranked highest in five of the six regions surveyed for **J.D. Power**’s 2026 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study, beating Verizon by one region. The report, released Thursday, found that the Un-carrier delivered the strongest network performance in the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and West regions, although it did tie for first with Verizon Wireless in three of those regions. In total, Verizon ranked highest in four of the six, ranking second in the other two, including in the Southeast, where it tied with **AT&T**. **USCellular** ranked second in the North Central region. T-Mobile celebrated the win in a press release, saying that “as competitors lean on legacy claims, T-Mobile keeps moving forward.”

HULU + LIVE TV UNVEILS SKINNY SPANISH BUNDLE

Disney will launch a new Spanish-language skinny bundle on **Hulu + Live TV** for \$29.99/month. Networks included in the package are **Bandamax**, **CNN en Español**, **De Película**, **De Película Clásico**, **Discovery en Español**, **Discovery Familia**, **ESPN Deportes**, **N+Foro**, **Fox Deportes**, **Galavisión**, **History en Español**, **Hogar HGTV**, **Nat Geo Mundo**, **TUDN**, **Telehit**, **Telehit Música**, **tinovelas**, **UNIMÁS**, and **Univision**. **Telemundo**, which is available on the vMVPD’s regular plans, is not included in the Hulu + Live TV Español bundle. The \$29.99/month plan also gives customers access to Hulu and **Disney+**’s streaming libraries or there’s a \$28.99/month option for just the linear channels.

PUBLIC SAFETY CHECK-UP

The **House Communications** subcommittee on Thursday quickly forwarded a slate of public safety bills on to the full committee. Among the six is the Emergency Reporting Act, which directs the **FCC** to issue reports after activation of its Disaster Information Reporting system and to make improvements to network outage reporting. If it becomes law, the FCC would have to hold at least one public hearing relating to all events during the preceding one-year period for which the system was active for at least seven days. Hearings could include impacted residents, communications providers, local government officials, first responders, utilities and others. The FCC would need to issue a report within 120 days of the hearing that details broadband and mobile outages as well as recommendations to improve network resiliency.

OPTIMUM THINKING GLOBAL

Optimum introduced new international calling and roaming plans for **Optimum Mobile** users. The refreshed international calling plans now have two price categories for outbound calls. Customers can get unlimited calls and texts to Mexico and Canada for \$5/month, or they can choose the \$15/month option that gives 300 call minutes and 300 SMS/MMS messages to 181 countries, including most of Latin America and Europe, and 60 SMS/MMS messages to other countries. Optimum Mobile's new Travel Pass offering—available in more than 189 countries—has a \$35/week tier for 5 Gigs of data without needing to purchase a separate eSIM. There's also a \$70/week plan that adds 300 call minutes and 300 SMS messages to the benefits. For Optimum Mobile folks subscribed to the Unlimited Max plan, they'll receive 300 minutes of outbound calling and 300 texts from the U.S. to Mexico, Canada and the Dominican Republic. Additionally, Unlimited Max users traveling in those countries get 5 Gigs of data roaming, 300 minutes of voice roaming and 300 texts.

BROADCAST'S PACKERS-BEARS LIFT

The dramatic Packers-Bears Wild Card game on **Prime Video** set an **NFL** streaming record, but broadcast still pitched in a good chunk of viewers. With the 31.61 million total viewers for the game—a 9.82 rating among the national Live+1 audience for P2+—**TVB** pointed out that figure includes local broadcast ratings from Chicago and Green Bay (games streaming on Prime Video are also televised on local stations in the

featured teams' DMA). **Nielsen** data showed that Chicago alone had 1.73 million viewers and an 18.4 Live+Same Day rating, meaning Prime Video's streaming-only audience dips to around 29.87 million. Green Bay's viewership hasn't been reported yet. The weekend high was the 49ers' win over the Eagles on **Fox**, which posted 40.97 million viewers and a 12.73 rating.

MIDCO SPORTS UPGRADE

Midco continues to invest in its regional sports coverage, announcing that it will use **Visa** as its new streaming platform provider for **Midco Sports'** upgrade this summer. Visa will offer an AI-powered digital platform for scalable live streaming, real-time video clipping, AI-generated highlight moments and fan engagement features, including multiscreen viewing. It also extends Midco Sports' reach with **Samsung** and **LG** connected TV experiences.

GOLF CHANNEL, DP TOUR EXTEND

The **Golf Channel**, now under **Versant** ownership, reached a multiyear media rights extension with the **DP World Tour**. The European-based competition will remain with Golf Channel through 2030 and have nearly 600 hours of live tournament coverage aired on the network annually. This year's DP World Tour slate began Thursday at the Dubai Invitational.

FIBER FRENZY

Astound Business Solutions completed a fiber network expansion project that spans from NYC to Ashburn, Virginia. The project bolsters connectivity between critical data hubs and enables scale and resiliency for enterprise, media and other business customers. The latest fiber route extends over 300 miles and offers 33.6 Tbps of additional capacity, while also supporting high-speed connectivity and capacity with wavelengths ranging from 10 Gbps to 800 Gbps. The fiber path was built to bring a lower-latency service option between NY and the D.C. area without running into congestion points near Philadelphia and New Jersey.

CFX 100 DEADLINE SOON

Nearly 24 hours are left to get those **Cablefax 100** nominations in. **Cablefax: The Magazine** is looking for trailblazers in cable, media, technology, advertising, policy and broadband whose impacts touch millions. Previous honorees are eligible, and if you want to throw your hat in the ring, self-nominations are encouraged as well. Find out more details on the CFX 100 website or email Mary-Lou French [here](#).

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (01/05/26-01/11/26)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.678	2183
MS NOW	0.294	947
ESPN	0.217	698
CNN	0.200	644
HGTV	0.177	570
HALL	0.176	568
TLC	0.131	421
TBS	0.125	401
HIST	0.117	376
USA	0.115	369
FOOD	0.110	353
DISC	0.097	312
INSP	0.096	308
TV LAND	0.092	297
GSN	0.091	294
A&E	0.086	276
HALLMYS	0.081	259
OXY	0.074	238
BRAVO	0.073	234
ID	0.072	233
NAN	0.068	218
LIFE	0.067	217
ESPN2	0.067	215
AMC	0.061	195
NWSMX	0.060	192
FX	0.056	182
TNT	0.055	176
REELZ	0.054	174
BET	0.053	169
NFL	0.048	155
WETV	0.047	151
ADSM	0.045	144
FRFM	0.044	143
PRMNT	0.042	136
BTN	0.040	129
COM	0.040	128
NWSNTN	0.040	128
FS1	0.039	125
SYFY	0.039	125
LMN	0.038	122
NATGEO	0.037	120
FXX	0.036	116
IFC TV	0.036	114
FETV	0.035	113
MGNLA	0.035	113
MTV	0.034	108
TRAVEL	0.031	101

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.