

Cablefax Daily

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Quad Squad: FCC Getting New Round of Broadcast Ownership Input

Reply comments are due today at the **FCC** on its quadrennial review of broadcast ownership rules. That means it'll probably be Monday before the FCC posts them all, and while many comments are likely to restate entrenched positions, a few new threads may still emerge.

"Past quads haven't focused on dual network prohibition being removed, and in the comment cycle this time, you did see Fox putting that out there," **Morgan Lewis** Partner *Danielle Burt* told **CFX**. "I do believe there will be some interesting reply comments in relation to that dual network prohibition. I don't know who may come in, *per se*, but I do think that there will be some follow-up on [it]. In past quad reviews, the focus has really been on local ownership stations, top four, sub caps with radio."

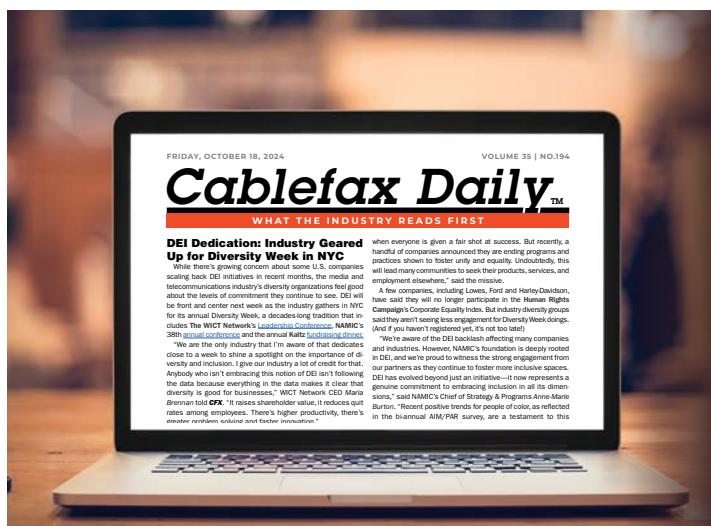
The dual network prohibition prevents a merger between or among any of the "Big Four" broadcast television networks—**ABC**, **CBS**, **Fox**, and **NBC**. In comments filed last month, Fox Corp. argued that the rule is obsolete with networks competing not only with cable channels, but also streamers and digital video providers. "Elimination of the Dual Network Rule would strengthen both competition and localism by giving the owners of the targeted broadcast networks greater flexibility to strengthen themselves and compete with digital video providers through strategic transactions—or, at the very least, to consider such transactions when exploring their future,"

Fox said. "Importantly, transactions contemplated by these networks would still be subject to fulsome review by antitrust regulators and (assuming any transfer of licenses along with a network) the Commission itself."

Replies coming in may dig into what elimination of the dual network rule could mean for retransmission consent as well as what it might mean for local affiliates.

NCTA used its [initial comments](#) to push for the FCC to reinstate the top-four prohibition that was struck down by the **Eighth Circuit** in July. The rule prevented a single entity from owning or controlling more than one top-four-rated station in a local market. Burt noted that the FCC didn't ask about the top-four rule in this proceeding and it hasn't opened up anything separately on the issue after the Eighth Circuit ruling. "So, it does seem to suggest that it's not something that the FCC is looking to reinstate at this point in time. Obviously, there will be comments and have already been in the quad proceeding asking for a reinstatement, but it doesn't feel as if there's a lot of emphasis on the Commission to take that up," she said.

The Telecommunications Act requires the FCC to review its broadcast media ownership every four years. It's often a delayed process. The FCC is actually working on the 2022 quad review, which was partly delayed due to legal challenges to the 2018 Quadrennial Review Order. These regulatory check-ups are routine at the FCC, but this one feels a bit different. "I think this particular FCC administration has set a tone by virtue of



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their Delete, Delete, Delete proceedings, and it certainly suggests that they may be interested in looking at loosening lots of different regulations," Burt said, predicting that the potential for loosening some of the ownership rules in this proceeding is "higher than it has perhaps been in the past."

While there's a lot of noise over possibly relaxing the 39% national ownership limit for a single broadcast entity as well as the relationships between national networks and local broadcasters, those are separate proceedings. And in the case of the 39% cap, it's a refresh of the record. Burt thinks the direction there is still pretty hazy. "There was a congressional hearing [this week] where they were trying to pin down Chairman Carr on his position. And you know, I think he's continued to say, 'we're going to take this under advisement.' He has not necessarily committed that the FCC will do it," she said.

Newsmax CEO Chris Ruddy has been sounding a strong alarm against raising the cap, worrying that it could hurt independent networks like his. NCTA, the **National Hispanic Media Coalition** and the **National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians–Communications Workers of America** have also raised objections.

"Not only do you have some different voices in the market [speaking] about what could happen with respect to this ownership cap, but there's been rumblings in Congress as well," Burt added. "So there's always the possibility that somebody introduces some legislation, or that there are some other efforts that are undertaken outside of the FCC."

Burt's best prediction for when we could see some action from the FCC on this quad review? Before the end of the year. "I just think that there is less being discussed in this quad review as compared to some others. There's been a lot of removals of some of the ownership rules over time, and therefore there's not as much to be discussed," she said. "I also think that there are some particular deals that are hoping to not have to have any individual deal waivers, but could rely upon some change in the rules."

OUR WILDEST 2026 PREDICTIONS

CFX Download is back and kicking off the year by predicting the major stories and twists that could shake up the industry in 2026. We of course talk about **Warner Bros. Discovery**, media ownership, **Verizon-Frontier** and **Charter-Cox**, but also throw out our wildest predictions, including one from Editor Noah Ziegler that would be the regulation shocker of the year if it were to happen. [Tune in](#) and place your bets! (Not actual gambling advice.)

COMMSCOPE LOSES STATE GRANT

Maybe it was the recent **Amphenol** transaction that [closed this week](#), or maybe it was the delays in BEAD funding. Or maybe it was both. The North Carolina Economic Investment Committee rescinded a job investment grant for **CommScope** after the manufacturer said it was canceling a \$60 million expansion plan that would've created 250 jobs. [According](#) to the *Charlotte Observer*, the grant was worth up to \$1.9 million in incentives and would've been used for a new fiber optic manufacturing facility in Catawba. The company had originally [unveiled](#) plans back in 2023. However, CommScope informed North Carolina's Department of Commerce in December that it wouldn't be able to meet local hiring or investment requirements, and with the uncertainty in BEAD along with a newly minted merger with Amphenol, it put CommScope's plans in a precarious spot. **CFX** reached out for comment but didn't hear back by our deadline. CommScope aims to remain in North Carolina.

FIBER FRENZY

Rural North Carolina-based provider **Fybe** crossed 8,000 subscribers. The company launched in 2016 as Roanoke Connect Holdings under the **Roanoke Cooperative**. It began connecting customers via fixed wireless in 2018, before committing to fiber in 2021. Two years later, it rebranded to Fybe and began accelerating fiber deployments. Recently, Fybe introduced 2 Gig plans for customers.

DOING GOOD

Charter opened applications for its sixth class of Spectrum Scholars. Through the program, 15 college students will be awarded \$20,000 each, totaling \$300,000 in scholarships. Scholars will participate in a two-year professional development program and a paid internship at Charter. The program includes a dedicated mentor, career-readiness education and training and access to leadership and networking events. Since 2020, Charter has invested over \$2 million in the program and welcomed over 90 Spectrum Scholars. Eligible students can [apply](#) for the 2026 class now through April 3.

AWARDS

NCTA got a couple of additions to its trophy case. The AVA Digital Awards, an international competition that highlights creative professionals and digital communications, recognized the docufilm "After the Storm" in two Long-Form and Streaming

Video categories: Informational and Documentary. The eight-minute film [shines a light](#) on the communications restoration and recovery efforts that happen after natural disasters. Other AVA Digital Awards winners include **Comcast Business** for its Digital Marketing and Integrated Campaigns at The Players Championship and **Amazon** for its achievements in AI cloud engineering.

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PEOPLE

NAB SVP, Communications Alex Siciliano is departing the organization next week to pursue another professional opportunity. Siciliano had been with NAB since 2022 and began leading its communications in February 2023. Taking over his spokesperson responsibilities will be Grace Whaley, who became NAB's Director, Communications and Social Media this month, and *Judianne Meredith*, who joined NAB in August as a Communications Coordinator. – Longtime **SCTE** exec Steve Harris has joined **UCL Americas**, which provides products for

processing and splicing optical fibers. He will serve as VP, Sales and Marketing for Broadband. Harris spent 15 years at SCTE and **CableLabs**, most recently as VP, Global Commercial Relationships.

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PROGRAMMING

Maybe there's 105 days of summer vacation. **Disney** has greenlit a third movie for the "Phineas and Ferb" franchise. The animated series was revived in June for a fifth season after a 10-year hiatus. New eps of the series drop on **Disney+** Jan. 17.

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EDITORS' NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not be publishing Monday, Jan. 19, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Your next issue will arrive Tuesday, Jan. 20. We'll keep you updated on breaking news at [Cablefax.com](#).

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Quotable

"Chairman, you've turned the FCC into Trump's attack dog to crush First Amendment rights through FCC extortion. The Chinese Communist Party would be impressed. There was a time when you passionately defended First Amendment rights. In fact, you and I tangoed over COVID and issues related to that. So how do you justify using the FCC to censor news and satire of Trump's rampant corruption?"

- Rep. Darren Soto (D-FL) to Brendan Carr during the House Communications subcommittee's FCC oversight hearing.



Up Ahead

- JAN. 29:** [FCC Open Meeting, D.C.](#)
- JAN. 30:** [NTCA AI Summit, Online](#)
- FEB. 1-3:** [IAB Annual Leadership Meeting, Palm Springs, CA](#)
- FEB. 1-4:** [Realscreen Summit, Miami](#)
- FEB. 4-6:** [NATPE Global, Miami](#)
- FEB. 4-5:** [INCOMPAS Policy Summit, D.C.](#)
- FEB. 16-18:** [NCTC Winter Educational Conference, Las Vegas](#)