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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

DirecTV: Media Consolidation Hurts—Not Helps—Local News

Advocates of relaxing media ownership rules frequently argue that doing so would strengthen local journalism, but **DirecTV** claims the opposite is true and it has the receipts.

It filed an analysis of markets with a broadcast duopoly, triopoly or quadropoly with the **FCC** on Tuesday, finding that 98.2% of news directors are shared in DMAs with joint ownership of multiple Big Four affiliations and 97.3% of talent are shared. DirecTV's scouring of websites also found that 90.5% of news sites are shared in DMAs with joint ownership of multiple Big Fours.

"Recent history shows that when broadcasters acquire a second, third, or fourth station in a local market, they consolidate news operations, leaving one newsroom where there had been two, three, or four, thus decreasing the quality of local news," DirecTV said.

The provider has previously made that argument in the pending Nexstar-Tegna merger, but its new filing shows that the same applies in "the vast majority" of markets in which any broadcaster holds a duopoly, triopoly or quadropoly today. "The co-owned stations offered essentially the same local news," DirecTV said, urging the FCC to reject broadcaster proposals that would consolidate ownership in a DMA.

DirecTV's analysis found local newsroom consolidation for duopolies and above for a long list of broadcast owners, including **Allen Media, Block Communications, Cox Media Group, Gray Media, Hearst, Sinclair, Tegna, Rincon** and many more. Of

the more than 90 duopolies analyzed, there were only a handful of consolidation exceptions. Gray Media Lincoln-Hastings, Nebraska, stations **KSNB (NBC)** and **KOLN (CBS)** do not share a news site, news director or talent. The other exception is **Scripps'** Helena, Montana stations **KXLH (CBS)** and **KTVH (NBC)**. There were a few examples where stations didn't share a news site, but did share talent and/or a news director.

DirecTV's comments are part of the FCC's 2022 Quadrennial Review of broadcast ownership rules. **NCTA** is among those asking the FCC to reinstate the top-four prohibition, which prevented a single entity from owning or controlling more than one top-four rated station in a local market. The rule was struck down by the Eighth Circuit in July. The Quadrennial Review also includes the Local Television Ownership Rule, which generally limits owners to two stations in a market, and the Dual Network Rule, which prohibits mergers between the Big 4 broadcasters.

Last week, four members of the Congressional Black Caucus wrote the FCC to speak out against relaxing statutory limits on broadcast ownership, including the 39% national audience cap that's being tested by the proposed **Nexstar-Tegna** merger. They also claimed consolidation reduces local news. "What remains is often duplicated newscasts and national content that crowds out the very local coverage that is supposed to distinguish local broadcast television from online platforms. As a result, communities lose trusted sources of information at a time when accurate, local news is more important than ever. These harms fall especially hard on Black communities and other communi-

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ties of color,” said the letter from Reps *Wesley Bell* (D-MO), *Troy Carter* (D-LA), *Steven Horsford* (D-NV) and *Robin Kelly* (D-IL).

Meanwhile, the FCC has approved some smaller M&A deals. On Friday, it gave the OK to Sinclair acquiring the licenses of **Howard Stirk Holdings**-owned NBC affiliate in Flint, Michigan; a **Cunningham Broadcasting**-owned **ABC** station in Traverse City, Michigan, and the **Deerfield Media**-owned ABC affiliate serving Rochester, NY. DirecTV had petitioned against the deals, claiming they would have negative effects on retransmission consent.

“While the Commission will consider transaction-specific objections to otherwise rule-compliant transactions, we find that DirecTV has failed to advance any such objections. Accordingly, we conclude that grant of the Applications will result in public interest benefits and serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity,” read the Media Bureau decision.

PSKY UPS WBD OFFER

PSKY’s “best and final” offer for **Warner Bros. Discovery** came in at \$31 per share in cash, plus a ticking fee of \$0.25 per share for every quarter the transaction doesn’t close after Sept. 30 as well as the \$2.8 billion termination fee to be paid to **Netflix** if WBD decides to go with PSKY. The revised proposal also includes a \$7 billion regulatory termination fee payable by PSKY in the event the deal doesn’t gain regulatory approval. The WBD board determined that the amended offer “could reasonably be expected” to beat Netflix’s \$28 per share all-cash offer, but stopped short of recommending the PSKY transaction. WBD said it will continue to engage with PSKY, but the Netflix agreement remains in effect for the moment, with the board continuing to favor the streamer. Netflix would have four business days to match PSKY’s offer if WBD decides to switch suitors. Either way, the winning party should expect regulatory scrutiny ahead. It already looks like NFLX will have a [steep hill](#) to climb with the **DOJ**, while PSKY has claimed it’s already cleared DOJ antitrust hurdles despite not having a deal with WBD yet. **New Street Research**’s *Blair Levin* wrote in a note that if the DOJ doesn’t re-examine a WBD-PSKY combo if it’s formalized, the rapid approval “will look to some like a political fix, [which] could cause international antitrust authorities to be more skeptical of the US approval and heighten their own investigation,” adding that the recent Colbert/Talarico CBS fallout hasn’t helped PSKY’s case in terms of how the company’s relationship with the Trump administration is viewed. (Count Senate Dems as one group in the government who want a [much closer look](#) at PSKY’s dealings with the White House.) Levin concluded that “for now, investors in the companies have to consider other antitrust authorities in their calculations and for future investors in PSKY, if it wins

the bid, they will have to consider the risk of PSKY paying more than competitors, or losing talent, due to the political stigma.”

BLUMENTHAL PROBING FCC

Forget **FCC** Chair *Brendan Carr*. Sen *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) is going straight to the Media and Enforcement Bureau chiefs for answers on what he called “the weaponization” of the [equal time rule](#). Blumenthal, who serves as the Ranking Member on the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, wants all records related to Carr’s “involvement in the FCC’s threats to broadcasters and all legal interpretations, guidance and enforcement of matters associated with its baseless distortion of the equal time rule.” He said the subcommittee is conducting a preliminary inquiry into the FCC’s “abuse of power, including its investigations against targets of the President, leaks of investigations, favoritism toward supporters of the President, and misrepresentations of the law to intimidate the free press.” The bureau chiefs were given until March 6 to supply info, including on what sort of investigation was undertaken for radio broadcasting content and any communications with Carr and the White House on the equal time rule and an investigation into Texas U.S. Senate candidate *James Talarico*’s (D) appearance on **ABC**’s “The View.” The senator also wrote to **Paramount** Chairman and CEO *David Ellison* asking about *Stephen Colbert*’s [claim](#) that **CBS** pushed back on airing an interview with Talarico. “The Subcommittee is engaged in an inquiry into political favoritism and the apparent corruption of antitrust review under the *Trump* Administration, including the FCC’s review of Skydance’s acquisition of Paramount and Paramount’s attempts to acquire **Warner Bros.**,” he wrote. “Paramount’s decision to comply, while it is attempting to enlist the Department of Justice and White House to intervene in the Warner Bros.’ transaction, calls into question its motivations for silencing Mr. Colbert.”

IT’S A VIX WORLD

While total revenue for 2025 was down by 5% YOY at \$4.8 billion, **TelevisaUnivision** counted the performance of its DTC business, and particularly the milestones reached by its Spanish-language streamer **Vix**, as major wins last year. On a 4Q25 earnings call Tuesday, CEO *Daniel Alegre* said that DTC had achieved full-year profitability, with big plans ahead for Vix as it expands its slate of original content, microdramas and prepares for the FIFA World Cup in June. DTC accounted for nearly a quarter of total revenue in 2025 and contributed approximately 20% of adjusted OIBDA, which increased 2% YOY to \$1.6 billion. “This is a meaningful milestone, as it

demonstrates that our multi-platform model, where premium content supports broadcast and streaming, is working, and that Vix is now a scalable and economically sustainable platform,” said Alegre, who chalked up some of the DTC success to the way the programmer has shifted its content strategy. “We no longer follow a normal approach of premiering content on broadcast, then windowing it on digital. Our new model optimizes the value of the content and where the greatest overall portfolio audience reach can be viewed. This could mean, at times, launching on digital first and then broadcast.” TU is seeing its slate of microdramas as a good way to keep eyes glued to phone screens. The programmer released 40 “incredibly cost-effective” mini-novelas last year, with a plan to launch 100 more in 2026. U.S. subscription and licensing revenue grew 6% YOY to \$1.4 billion in 2025, with its affiliate renewals with multiple vMVPD partners, including **Hulu + Live TV** and **YouTube TV** (after a heated carriage dispute), as well as other renewals representing nearly half of TU’s linear sub revenue for the year. Alegre sees even more opportunities on this front via its skinny bundle deals. “What we are continuing to see is, and that’s something we are betting on, is the Spanish skinny bundles,” he said. “The Spanish skinny bundle is proving to be a really highly retentive, very profitable tier for our distributor partners, and we’re very much leaning into that.”

A BRAVE NEW VISION

As a handful of **MLB** teams depart from the **FanDuel Sports Network** portfolio, the Atlanta Braves are moving forward with their own RSN venture: **BravesVision**. It’ll be fully operated by the franchise and serve as the official local TV home of the Braves starting this upcoming season, with **BravesVision** set to produce over 140 games in addition to pre- and post-game programming. The team said it’ll announce distribution partners across cable, satellite and streaming providers once those agreements are finalized. However, **BravesVision** will use MLB’s streaming platform to provide direct-to-consumer access with **Braves.TV**, which will carry all non-nationally televised games without any blackout restrictions. And the Braves aren’t forgetting about OTA distribution. The team is again working with **Gray Media** to simulcast a select number of regular-season games for free in Atlanta and other Southeast region markets. Games available OTA will be announced before Opening Day (March 27).

CLOSING THE OLYMPICS

And just like that, the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics finished in the blink of an eye, but the symbolic ending to **NBCUniversal’s** “Legendary February” finished on the podium. This edition of the Olympics averaged 23.5 million viewers on **NBC**, **Peacock**, **NBCU** digital platforms, **CNBC** and **USA Network** across the combined live afternoon (2-5pm) and primetime windows. That’s a 96% improvement from the 2022 Beijing Games (12 million) and the most-watched Winter Olympics since Sochi 2014. **NBCU** noted that 15 full competition days eclipsed 20 million viewers. While

Peacock and **NBCU’s** other digital platforms had a record 16.7 billion minutes of Olympics coverage streamed, **USA** was the top sports and entertainment cable network from Feb. 5-17, posting 1.7 million viewers in primetime and 1.3 million in total day. The top local market prize went to Milwaukee, followed by Minneapolis, Ft. Myers, Pittsburgh, Dayton and St. Louis. The final day of the Milan Games was headlined by the U.S. men’s hockey team’s overtime win against Canada to earn gold. The dramatic showdown reeled in 20.7 million viewers across **NBC**, **Peacock** and **USA**, peaking at 26 million viewers when *Jack Hughes* scored the game-winning goal. The average live audience came in at 18.6 million on **NBC** and **Peacock**, which marks the most-watched pre-9am sporting event on record in U.S. history and the second-most-watched hockey game ever, only trailing the 2010 men’s gold medal game with 27.6 million—though that contest began at 3:15pm.

MAYWEATHER VS PACQUIAO SET FOR ROUND TWO ON NETFLIX

A memorable boxing showdown is slated for a rematch after **Netflix** announced its next live sports move. *Floyd Mayweather Jr.* and *Manny Pacquiao* will spar Sept. 19 at the Las Vegas Sphere, bringing the two fighters back after their first battle in 2015—which was behind a pay-per-view wall. Full details regarding the undercard and ticket availability will be revealed in the coming weeks. It’ll be the first boxing event held at the venue, but it won’t be **Netflix’s** first time streaming a high-profile boxing match. **Netflix** was the host of *Jake Paul vs Mike Tyson* in November 2024, *Katie Taylor vs Amanda Serrano* in July and *Canelo Álvarez vs Terence Crawford* in September. It also has an MMA event scheduled for May 16 featuring *Ronda Rousey* and *Gina Carano*.

CARRIAGE

There’s now a **FAST** channel for Spanish-speaking fans of **Western**. **INSP** rolls out **Western Bound Español** on **Plex** on Wednesday. It’s the sister net of **Western Bound**, which features originals such as “Wild West Chronicles” and “Ultimate Cowboy Showdown.”

COX BUSINESS’ AI GUIDE

Cox Business is looking to provide some clarity as companies and their employees wrap their hands around AI technology. **Cox** released “The AI Business Playbook” on Tuesday, a tool for business leaders to help mold AI strategies and provide guidance in transitioning from experimentation to adoption. The guide—authored by business management expert *Gene Marks*—includes insights from various **Cox Business** executives on how to invest in AI solutions that deliver ROI, as well as other topics such as AI rollout plans, understanding which AI features are needed in core operations and how to manage risk and ensure responsible use. The AI Business Playbook is available to download for free [here](#).