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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

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INDUSTRY: HANG UP ON CALL CENTER RULES

When it comes to the **FCC**'s proceeding on onshoring customer call centers, **NCTA** argues that it's outside the agency's authority and should be something instead that Congress decides whether to move forward on. It's in good company, with hardly any comments in the proceeding in favor of the FCC stepping in.

The Commission has proposed establishing a uniform set of requirements for off-shore call centers that include limiting the percentage of customer service calls that can be handled at call center locations outside of the U.S. as well as disclosure requirements and the right to transfer to a domestic agent. The cable association argues that this is something the market can take care of itself.

"There is no reason to single out the communications sector for regulation of off-shore call centers because competition already promotes sound customer service practices, including through such call centers," said NCTA, whose members include **Comcast**, **Charter**, **Cox** and **Mediacom**. "NCTA members understand that a company that does not provide the support a customer expects risks losing that customer to a competitor."

Charter has been held up by FCC Chair *Brendan Carr* as the poster child for moving all its call centers stateside, on-shoring the combined companies' customers sales and service functions after the acquisition of **Time Warner Cable** and **Bright House** in 2016. It's pledged to do the same for **Cox Communications'** call centers when that deal closes. In comments filed last week, Charter reiterated the benefits it has seen from on-shoring, such as a decline in trouble calls, and asked that if the FCC adopts any rules, it exempt providers that invest in a 100% domestic, employee-based customer service operation. "Such reporting would not be necessary when the goal of any such rules would have already been achieved," Charter said.

ACA Connects noted that its members are community-based providers in competition with national players that distinguish themselves by providing exceptional, hands-on customer service. Still, it doesn't want the FCC to adopt the proposed rules, arguing they would disproportionately burden small and mid-sized providers and would almost certainly exceed the limits of the agency's legal authority. What's more, ACAC argues that the rules could be used by future Commissions to justify sweeping regulations based on broad statutory interpretations to further their own policy goals. "For instance, a future Commission might deem it 'unjust' or 'unreasonable' to use fossil fuels to power telecommunications facilities," ACAC said in comments.

EchoStar—touting that its **DISH Network** was named #1 in Customer Satisfaction among cable/satellite TV service providers nationally for six consecutive years by J.D. Power—said that the FCC's notion that customer service has suffered as a result of the movement of call centers offshore does not reflect reality. "EchoStar's own call

DID YOU KNOW?

The U.S. World Cup audience still skews predominantly male, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence. Approximately 70% of World Cup viewers are men, although younger cohorts show a more balanced gender mix. The gap widens substantially among older viewers.

center improvements (and resulting recognition from third parties) are proof that the market is working: its offshore call center representatives are well educated, well trained, experienced, and effective," the company said, noting its foreign call centers consistently score similarly to their domestic counterparts on customer satisfaction and quality assessment measures.

Afni, headquartered in Illinois, operates two call centers in the U.S. as well as four call centers in Mexico and the Philippines that serve U.S. enterprises in communications, insurance and financial services. The firm argued such rules would result in higher costs that will be passed onto customers. Afni said its call center staff are well educated, highly trained and fully proficient in English. It also uses Krisp, an accent neutralization application to improve clarity, comprehension and overall service quality for U.S. consumers during customer service interactions. "Although we receive relatively few complaints regarding difficulty in understanding due to accents, generally less than 4% of calls, the use of Krisp has cut that percentage roughly in half," Afni said.

Even the **Communications Workers of America**, which has worked for years to onshore call centers, has concerns with the proposal. The union argued that the FCC notice focuses too much on English language proficiency in offshore call centers when it could help expose the problems of the global outsourcing industry by requesting and publishing information on the wages and performance metrics that workers labor under.

CWA also challenged the Notice of Proposed for Rulemaking for asking whether providers would be able to save some costs by deploying AI to handle calls. "It would be a sad irony if a rule nominally designed to reshore call center jobs and improve customer service instead simply pushed more customers to artificial intelligence agents that are broadly unpopular and whose ability to actually solve the customer's challenges are highly limited," CWA said.

HOUSE JUDICIARY REPORT RIPS NFL

Ahead of Wednesday's hearing on the Sports Broadcasting Act, **House Judiciary** released an interim staff report that finds the **NFL** has stretched an antitrust exemption from the legislation beyond its original intent. It especially goes after Sunday Ticket, finding it's mainly bought by fans who are trying to watch their favorite team and are stuck with no other option. The report, titled "The Sports Broadcasting Act: A Special-Interest Antitrust Exemption Gone Awry," cited survey data the Committee got from **YouTube**, the current home of NFL Sunday Ticket, which found that over 70% signed up to watch their favorite team that's out of market. "Because of the NFL's control of all the games and restrictions on how out-of-market games are sold, consumers are compelled to purchase a too-big, too-expensive package," the report said. "The existence of this data raises several questions: Did the NFL simply not know consumers demanded a different product but were stuck buying Sunday Ticket from the NFL? Did the NFL understand consumer preferences but continuously offered a product that consumers did not desire and, through collusion, prevented individual teams from providing the single-team product consumers actually wanted to buy?" The report says **ESPN** proposed a package to the NFL that would have included Sunday Ticket at $70 per season, but it suggests the league rejected it because

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the offering "would be too affordable for consumers." NFL Commissioner *Roger Goodell* was invited to appear at Wednesday's Judiciary subcommittee hearing, but won't testify due to ongoing litigation related to the topic of the hearing. The DOJ has opened an investigation into whether the league has engaged in anticompetitive practices that result in increased costs for consumers.

WISPA DROPS OUT OF CHARTER-COX REVIEW

More greenlights in California for **Charter-Cox** merger. **WISPA – The Association for Broadband Without Boundaries** has told the **California Public Utilities Commission** it wants to withdraw as a party in the proceeding, saying it believes previous concerns have been resolved. WISPA was granted the right to intervene and become a party in April after raising concerns about Charter's policies with respect to wholesale customers in the state. Charter told the PUC that telecommunications offerings aren't subject to rules requiring that those services be made available to all potential purchasers, but its general policy is to offer such services where a mutually beneficial arrangement can be reached. California is the last remaining regulatory hurdle for the $34.5 billion merger, which received approval from the **FCC** in February. Charter and Cox are hoping the state PUC signs off on the deal by August.

CFX DOWNLOAD: THE BIGGEST SURPRISES OF THE YEAR SO FAR

The first half of the year has flown by and ***CFX Download*** is looking back at the biggest industry surprises of 2026 so far. We talk about shock TMT mergers, court battles and, yes, why the heck are those BEAD non-deployment dollars taking so long?! Come for the analysis, stay for World Cup shenanigans, including our picks for who we think will win the tournament. You can tune into the new episode on YouTube, Apple Podcasts and Spotify now!

REPORT: STATE CHALLENGE TO PSKY-WBD IMMINENT

The $110 billion **Paramount Skydance-Warner Bros. Discovery** merger seems poised to get the all clear from antitrust regulators at the DOJ, but could soon face hurdles at the state level. *Reuters* reports that California, New York and other U.S. states are preparing to file a lawsuit to halt the combo in the "coming weeks." California AG *Rob Bonta*, who is also leading the 13-state coalition against the **Nexstar-Tegna** deal, has been investigating PSKY-WBD for weeks and was said to be considering a legal challenge. PSKY currently expects to close the transaction by 3Q26, although it's reportedly targeting to wrap things up as soon as July. A lawsuit could throw a wrench in that plan. Other obstacles could arise as well. Senate Dems led by Majority Leader *Chuck Schumer* (D-NY) previously sent letters to PSKY CEO *David Ellison* threatening future litigation concerning the company's contacts with the *Trump* administration, while there are also calls for regulators to investigate the foreign investment in the deal, including from Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds.

AMAZON, CORNING INK DATA CENTER DEAL

Amazon inked a multibillion-dollar agreement with **Corning**, which will see the connectivity infrastructure manufacturer supply optical fiber, cable and connectivity solutions to power the tech giant's expanding data center footprint in the U.S. The investment will create 1,000 new jobs at Corning's facilities across North Carolina and support hundreds of additional construction jobs to expand the manufacturer's facilities. The companies will also work together to expand the Fiber Optic Technician training program at Catawba Valley Community College, which trains students for careers in fiber manufacturing and related technical roles. The deal builds on Amazon's plans to invest $10 billion in North Carolina to expand cloud computing infrastructure. The tech company has already invested over $20 billion in the state since 2010.

CENTURYLINK COPPER THEFT

Last week, a cross-section of the industry gathered to discuss network vandalism. On Monday, the **FCC** published a decision tied to copper theft. **CenturyLink** had asked for emergency relief after vandals cut and removed copper cables at a wire center in Bellevue-Sherwood, Washington, knocking out service on April 8, 2025. But the company didn't file its application until May 15, 2026 — well past the 65-day deadline — citing internal process errors. The FCC denied the request on those grounds. CenturyLink expects full service restoration this month and will keep the FCC updated.

ARCHTOP FIBER SUPPORTS THE TROOPS

Hudson Valley ISP **Archtop Fiber** launched the Fiber Freedom campaign supporting service members, veterans and military families to celebrate America 250. From June 14 (Flag Day) through July 31, the provider will donate $2.50 from every new residential and business subscription to support military-focused orgs across the Hudson Valley. It expects to raise more than $10,000 through the initiative.

TELEMUNDO'S NEW FAST CHANNEL

NBCUniversal Local's Telemundo Station Group launched a new FAST channel featuring local programming from Spanish-language stations in the southwest U.S. Noticias Telemundo Suroeste is available now on the participating stations' digital platforms and **Amazon**'s Fire TV Channels, with the channel soon to be added to other FAST platforms. Suroeste includes local news programming from Telemundo 39 Phoenix, Telemundo Colorado, Telemundo Utah, Telemundo Las Vegas, Telemundo 40 Tucson and Telemundo Nuevo México.

U.S. WORLD CUP VIEWING HABITS

While the 2026 FIFA World Cup is expected to deliver huge engagement when it kicks off Thursday, an analysis by **S&P Global Market Intelligence** found that U.S. interest in the tournament still lags behind other markets, including Europe and Asia. Only 13% of online adults in the U.S. typically watch World Cup games vs nearly half in the U.K., although S&P noted that viewership is expected to rise in 2026 since the U.S. is one of the host countries. Notably, U.S. World Cup viewers do tend to consume plenty of media in general, averaging 5.8 hours of TV/online video, 3.5 hours of audio and 2.8 hours of gaming daily. They also love watching other sports, with 78% of U.S. fans favoring football and 70% tuning into basketball.

FIBER FRENZY

Charter will connect more than 1,500 homes and businesses to Spectrum services in Owen County and Pulaski County, Kentucky. An expansion is also planned in Douglas County, Wisconsin, where it'll bring over 1,000 addresses online.

MAY RATINGS

A familiar top three filled both the primetime and total-day cable TV leaderboards for May. However, **Fox News**' primetime mark of 2.38 million viewers P2+ was kept in sight by **ESPN**'s 2.27 million thanks to the **NBA** and **NHL** Playoffs, while **MS Now** checked in at 942,000. Still, Fox News said it was the most-watched May during a midterm election year in network history. **TNT** had 798,000—also from the NBA and NHL postseason—and **HGTV** had 738,000. Fox News had a larger gap in total day, reaching 1.53 million, followed by ESPN (767,000), MS Now (594,000), **CNN** (460,000) and HGTV (361,000). -- The battle of the business nets once again split both ways last month. Although **Fox Business'** total business-day (weekday 9:30am-5pm) viewership was 243,000 compared to **CNBC**'s 238,000, market hours (weekday 9am-4pm) went to CNBC, which scored 244,000 vs Fox Business' 240,000. Both nets tied in total day with 146,000 total viewers. When it came to the A25-54 group, it was all CNBC. The **Versant**-owned network had 65,000 viewers A25-54 for business day over Fox Business' 13,000, in addition to 67,000 during market hours and 37,000 in total day (Fox Business posted 12,000 in both categories).

PEOPLE

Charter named *Chris Hacker* as its new Head of Corporate Security, succeeding *Jane Rhodes*, who is retiring. Hacker will oversee the programs designed to protect the company's employees, facilities and operations. He'll also manage partnerships with law enforcement and public safety agencies and help advance Charter's security strategy across its footprint. -- **TDS Telecommunications** named *John Cryer Jr.* its VP, MDU Sales. Cryer Jr. will manage the operator's national MDU strategy as it looks to bolster revenue growth, expand fiber reach and improve subscriber penetration. He was most recently division VP, Business Development for **Comcast**'s Central Division. Before that, Cryer Jr. held roles at **Rogers Communications** and **Cox Communications**.