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ABC FIGHTS BACK AGAINST THE FCC

Disney and **ABC** have gone back and forth with the **FCC** since Chairman *Brendan Carr* assumed his seat in early 2025. Now, as the network finds itself embroiled in multiple battles with the agency, the House of Mouse is asking viewers to join its defense.

On the day comments were due in the FCC's proceeding examining whether "The View" counts as a bona fide news interview program and thus should be exempt from political equal time guidelines, ABC launched its own public counterattack, rallying fans to push back against the inquiry—in addition to the case involving eight of its stations being called for early license renewals.

ABC rolled out a 20-second spot that aired across its owned-and-operated station footprint and digital platforms Monday. It opens with audio from The View's creator Barbara Walters before a narrator takes over to highlight the show's nearly three-decade run. "Now the FCC wants to control who is allowed to appear on the show," the spot said, displaying a QR code that directs folks to a webpage where they can file an express comment in the FCC's proceeding.

Unsurprisingly, the agency doesn't see it the same way ABC does. "Disney wants the FCC to classify 'The View' as a 'bona fide news program.' And it has chosen to run a campaign of misinformation to make its case—misleading view-

QUOTABLE

"The Commission has an obligation to honestly answer a fundamental question: whether placing 49.5% of the equity in the parent company of CBS, CNN and 28 broadcast television stations into the hands of three foreign governments serves the American public. We are prepared to pursue every available avenue—legislative, oversight and legal—to ensure that it does."
- Senate Dems on the FCC's review of foreign investment in PSKY-WBD deal

ers about the law. That is a choice," an FCC spokesperson said in a statement to ***CFX***. Although Carr didn't have as strong a response to the campaign, he used his **X** page to encourage followers to file a comment.

ABC also unveiled a separate spot focusing on the early renewals for stations in New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Fresno and Durham. "Channel 7 has proudly served you for more than 75 years. Every day, we commit to inform, entertain and serve you. Now, the FCC is questioning our commitment to the community," a spot for NYC's WABC-TV said, accompanied by a QR code that has a similar route to the FCC's online docket.

After the FCC ordered early license renewals for Disney's eight ABC stations in late April, it opened its probe into The View a few weeks later. The investigation was triggered when the show had Texas' U.S. Senate candidate *James Talarico* (D) on, which prompted questions regarding whether The View violated the Communications Act's equal time rule that requires broadcasters to provide comparable time and placement to opposing, qualified political candidates.

Civil liberties organizations, press freedom groups and journalism collectives largely filed in defense of The View ahead of Monday's deadline, though their arguments centered less on the program itself and more on what a narrowing of the equal time provision would mean for political coverage on broadcast TV. In a joint filing from **The Future of Free Speech**, **American Civil Liberties Union**, **Center for Democracy & Technology** and **National Coalition Against Censorship**, the groups argued that the FCC created uncertainty ahead of the 2026 midterm elections with its notice, adding that removing the exemption would cause more harm than help.

"Stripped of the exemption, a single candidate interview would obligate every station airing the program to offer comparable time to every legally qualified opponent. Broadcasters facing that exposure will not book more candidates; they will book none," the coalition wrote.

Meanwhile, the **Information Technology and Innovation Foundation** contends that the rule itself is unconstitutional. It believes that the 1943 *NBC v. United States* **Supreme Court** ruling that gave the FCC the ability to regulate broadcast speech on the basis of spectrum scarcity doesn't hold up.

"The equal opportunities requirement and the Public Notice depend on a mistaken paradigm about the nature of spectrum scarcity and its implications for First Amendment scrutiny," ITIF wrote. "While spectrum usage rights are indeed limited in supply, that fact does not authorize departure from First Amendment protections."

The **Center for American Rights** took the stance that The View is neither "news" nor "bona fide." The filing pointed to the cohosts' non-journalism backgrounds, but also used a quote from the program's Executive Producer Brian Teta, who said in 2024, "We're part of ABC News, but I always look

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Reply comments for the FCC's look into The View are due July 6. ABC's early license renewals were due late last month, but the public can comment until July 29.

PSKY-WBD MERGER'S POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The **DOJ** approved the $110 billion merger between **Paramount Skydance** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** earlier this month, but potential challenges from California, New York and other states are still looming. A report released by the L.A. County Department of Economic Opportunity isn't likely to dissuade California AG *Rob Bonta* from taking legal action against the combo. It estimated that approximately 2,495 jobs in the country and 6,000 globally could be at risk. The report referenced the $6 billion in savings that PSKY projects the merger will create, noting that the synergies will likely come from cutting duplicate corporate functions, streamlining tech and consolidating real estate. "Many of these areas are heavily based in Los Angeles County, meaning the County is particularly exposed to corporate consolidation," wrote DEO Director *Kelly LoBianco*, although she stressed that the estimate "should not be read as a layoff forecast; it only defines the scale of possible employment impacts that may be subject to consolidation." While discussing the go-ahead of the DOJ, the report points out that a "state-level lawsuit (and preliminary injunction) could significantly delay or derail the deal, despite DOJ approval." L.A. County plans to submit formal comments to the DOJ regarding antitrust concerns. PSKY responded to the report, saying that the merger will give the companies the scale and resources to invest in content, technology and jobs. – A group of Dem Senators, including *Cory Booker* (D-NJ), *Adam Schiff* (D-CA) and *Elizabeth Warren* (D-MA), are also continuing to call foul on the play. In a letter to **FCC** Chair *Brendan Carr*, they called on the Commission to halt the transaction until the agency can conduct a full Section 310(b)(4) review of the foreign investment funding part of PSKY's offer, citing potential risks to national security and foreign policy. Investors include Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds, which PSKY has said will hold non-voting shares in the combined company. "The structural complexity of these foreign ownership interests alone demands careful scrutiny," wrote the senators, who requested the Commission issue a formal notice restricting the deal from closing during its investigation.

NBCU UNVEILS ROCK STUDIOS

Comcast's **NBCUniversal** is evolving its in-house creative studio for brand integrations in its post-**Versant** world. The programmer established Rock Studios to help embed brands directly in NBCU programming, platforms and live events as well as offer marketers creative inspired by its IP, connect brands to its talent and creators and create brand-centric content and live experiences. NBCU's creative studio worked with over 400 brand partners in 2025, driving more than 9 billion impressions. More recently, Delta Airlines partnered with Rock Studios for a cross-platform Winter Olympics campaign that led to lifts in brand perception, including a 19% increase in recall and 38% in opinion.

XUMO EXPANDS FAST AD TARGETING CAPABILITIES

Charter and **Comcast** jv **Xumo** announced expanded integrations with **Gracenote** and **Iris.TV** to unlock better ad targeting and more precise activation across Xumo's FAST inventory. The partnerships will help brands improve relevance, reduce waste and support stronger performance outcomes in a fragmented streaming ecosystem. Xumo said that serving relevant ads can drive more than 5x higher brand purchase intent. The Xumo Play FAST platform delivered a record year in 2025, including 40% YOY growth in monthly active users and a 64% increase in total hours watched.

ESPN LOOKS TO BOOST BRAND INTEGRATIONS WITH FAN HOUSE

Disney Advertising is hoping to score with the company's prized sports asset, announcing plans to launch a new interactive hub called **ESPN** Fan House in August in time for the kickoff of college football season. The experience, available digitally and at live games, is designed for fans to engage more deeply with the ESPN ecosystem via live polls, trivia, sweepstakes, merchandise and brand integrations, while connecting advertisers to actively engaged users. Among the features unlocked for advertisers is the ability to deliver exclusive offers and rewards directly to fans via digital wallet integration and to create opportunities for product discovery around highlight moments. Publicis Sports will be the first agency to pilot Fan House with Disney Advertising.

PHILO LATEST TO IMPLEMENT PAUSE ADS

Advertisers can now tap into **Philo** subs through pause ads. The format is accessible to brands both directly and programmatically, allowing them to reach users when they pause content. Philo cited research showing that 81% of viewers pause specifically to avoid missing content and 54% of pause sessions last between one and five minutes, providing valuable time for brands to reach consumers, who are more likely to engage with interactive elements such as QR codes.

OPENVAULT ROLLS OUT VANTAGE FIBER

OpenVault's latest product unveiling hopes to help fiber operators detect and fix network issues before they affect customers. Instead of conducting manual inspections, the new Vantage Fiber solution automatically scans networks to identify degrading equipment or problem areas, doing so under a unified solution that includes automated monitoring, advanced diagnostics and a real-time view of network health. Vantage Fiber also pinpoints areas of concern on a map so crews can get there faster and auto-generates work orders, leading to fewer truck rolls and repeat service calls. Vantage Fiber is OpenVault's next step after launching Vantage PNM, which the company said has helped reduce critical modem alerts by 15%, increase first-time fix rates to over 70% and 22% faster onsite resolution.

CARRIAGE

Paris-based studio **Mediawan** launched a new kids FAST channel in the U.S. called **Wonderland Junior TV**. The channel features over 1,700 episodes from European kids' shows such as "The 3 Musketeers," "Robin Hood: Mischief in Sherwood" and "Monster Loving Maniacs." It's available now on **YouTube**, with distribution on major FAST platforms coming soon.

DOING GOOD

The **Sparklight** Charitable Giving Fund recently awarded more than $125,000 in grants to 28 nonprofit orgs across its footprint. The fund supports orgs strengthening education and digital literacy, tackling food insecurity and providing community development opportunities. The ISP also funded orgs working to help vulnerable children, increase the independence of seniors, improve workforce readiness and expand access to technology during this grant cycle. Since its launch in 2020, the fund has awarded over $1.3 million in grants to more than 300 orgs, aiming to provide $250,000 in grants annually.

PROGRAMMING

Time to learn how cricket works if you're a New York sports fan. **YES Network** and Gotham Sports App are set to air MI New York's Major League Cricket matches, starting June 26 and running through July 12. -- The longest-tenured "SportsCenter" anchor in **ESPN** history is retiring come June 30. *Linda Cohn*, who joined the network in July 1992 and crossed 5,000 episodes guiding the flagship program in 2016, will make her final SportsCenter appearances June 26 during the 6pm, 10pm and 11pm runnings. In addition to her SportsCenter duties, Cohn—a former collegiate hockey goalie—contributed to ESPN's hockey coverage as well. -- The 3-vs-3 basketball league created by *Ice Cube* penned a deal to stream its 2026 campaign on **Fubo**'s FAST channel **Fubo Sports Network**. BIG3 is set to air 16 games live starting June 20. Two games will stream each week. Additionally, BIG3's library of more than 100 archived games from previous seasons will be available on Fubo Sports Network. -- Apple TV's eight-episode comedy series starring *Matthew McConaughey* and *Woody Harrelson* "Brothers" will debut globally Sept. 23 with two episodes. A new episode will release each following Wedesnday through Nov. 4.