

IN TODAY'S ISSUE...

We're not too far from this year's Independent Show kicking off at Walt Disney World in Florida, an event NCTC and ACA Connects are hoping captures some magic as the broadband industry remains ever-evolving. To begin the countdown, NCTC CEO Lou Borrelli penned a guest column highlighting what to expect at this year's gathering and why it matters in today's highly competitive environment. Check it out on Page 5.

FROM SUMMIT TO FLY-INS FOR ACA CONNECTS

It's the end of an era, with **ACA Connects** moving away from its annual Summit in Washington, D.C., after more than 25 years. Instead of a couple of days of educational sessions and speakers followed by a lobbying day every February or March, the association will hold fly-ins three times a year for its 500 members.

The new grassroots advocacy approach is being billed as "ACA Connects You" with the first session set for Feb. 23-25, followed by events May 18-20 and Oct. 26-28. There's an asterisk there as the dates are subject to Congress being in session. That's likely one of the advantages of moving away from Summit, which had to be booked months (sometimes years) in advance. More than once, Summit had to contend with complications during its gathering, including competing with the State of the Union (2024), a snowstorm that closed the federal government (2018) or the **Mobile World Congress** earlier this year.

Another advantage is that members don't have to pay registration fees to attend the fly-ins, while this past Summit in March had a rolling rate ranging from \$475 to \$650.

In a [blog post](#) Tuesday about the change-up, ACAC President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer* actually liberally cited **CFX's** own [past coverage](#) (blush) about members taking their advocacy to the nation's capital. He described the new approach as a "stronger reflection of the round-the-clock advocacy happening at our association."

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Of course, ACA Connects works alongside **NCTC** for the annual **Independent Show** (this year, July 26-29 in Orlando). It remains to be seen whether some of those Summit speakers, largely lawmakers and regulators, shift to the Independent Show stage, but this year's agenda hints that it's a possibility with **FCC** Commissioner *Olivia Trusty* speaking. CFX will have Spellmeyer and NCTC Chief *Lou Borrelli* on an upcoming **CFX Download** podcast where we'll seek more info.

For ACAC members missing Summit's educational programming, state broadband associations offer some alternatives. **VCTA – Broadband Association of Virginia** is teaming with the **Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Association of Broadband Cooperatives** to support the **Mid-Atlantic Broadband Summit & Fiber Expo** in Richmond [Aug. 24-25](#), and it just completed a telehealth summit in May. Meanwhile, the **Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania's** state **Broadband Summit** will return [April 21-22, 2027](#). This year's event included **NCTA** CEO *Cory Gardner*, ACAC's Spellmeyer as well as operators and vendors. The **New England Connectivity and Telecommunications Association** (NECTA) is planning its [annual convention](#) for later this year, with the gathering heavily focused on politics, while BCAP's has more of an operations perspective.

ABC: WE DIDN'T ASK FOR 'THE VIEW' PROCEEDING

Reply comments in the **FCC's** proceeding over whether **ABC's** "The View" qualifies as a bona fide news interview program came due Monday, and the record continued to be favorable toward the **Disney**-owned broadcast network. The docket, at 77,643 total filings as of Tuesday afternoon, had comments come in recently from Houston's KTRK and ABC, **NAB** and groups such as **Freedom of the Press Foundation**, **National Women's Law Center**, **Digital Liberty** and **TechFreedom**. The ABC filing began by centering on a procedural argument, noting that the Commission directed it to file the Petition for Declaratory Ruling in the first place—and seeking further judgment on a question the FCC resolved in ABC's favor 24 years ago. The network argued that the 2002 ruling is binding and that the Media Bureau lacks authority to overturn it on its own, citing Chairman *Brendan Carr's* previous statements when he denied a Detroit station swap between **Adell Broadcasting** and **Mission Broadcasting** in 2024. At the time, Carr noted that the bureau "does not have authority to" make "new and novel decisions without authorization from the full Commission." On the proceeding's merits, ABC contended that The View "plainly qualifies" the FCC's three-factor test, writing that it remains regularly scheduled, controlled by ABC and programming decisions are based on newsworthiness rather than intent to advance or harm any candidacy. The network pointed to recent guests such as Vice President *J.D. Vance*, former First Lady *Jill Biden*, Sen. *Chris Murphy* (D-CT), **U.S. Supreme Court** Justices *Ketanji Brown Jackson* and *Sonia Sotomayor* and Georgia's former Republican Rep. *Marjorie Taylor Greene* as evidence of that editorial practice. ABC also rejected a few notions proposed by opposing commenters, arguing that requiring the consideration of every guest's ideology "is not a regulatory standard, but a surveillance regime—one that Congress never contemplated and that the First Amendment forbids." The **Center for American Rights** and **Independent Women** were two organizations ABC disputed, also pointing the finger at the FCC for selectively focusing on late-night and daytime TV instead of talk radio, "which often favors conservative views" and subsequently "driven a public perception that the Commission is acting based on political animus against disfavored speakers." The

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FCC's sole Democratic Commissioner *Anna Gomez* cheered ABC in a [post](#) on X. "ABC is right on this one. You don't have to like their coverage to see the danger here. Handing government the power to decide what's newsworthy and which guests to feature is a threat to press freedom, no matter which party is in charge," she wrote. Meanwhile, NAB argued that the 1934 Communications Act's equal time provision itself violates the First Amendment. The association also argued against the precedent SCOTUS set in 1969 with *Red Lion Broadcasting v. FCC*, noting the decision came when only 7,411 broadcast stations were licensed. As of March, the FCC counted 21,626 stations.

AKHAVAN RESIGNS FROM ECHOSTAR, HUGHES

Hamid Akhavan is out at **EchoStar Capital** and **Hughes**. According to an **SEC** filing, he notified the company that he will resign effective immediately from all positions after discussions with the board regarding a changing of strategic direction. That includes leaving the boards of Hughes and EchoStar as well as his roles as President/CEO Hughes and CEO of EchoStar Capital. The latter was created in November with Akhavan shifting from CEO of **EchoStar** to CEO of the unit to invest money from EchoStar's spectrum deals with **AT&T** and **SpaceX**. Those deals haven't closed yet, and EchoStar is now working through a Chapter 11 restructuring plan for **Dish DBS** and **Dish Wireless**. EchoStar Capital is going away and will fold into Corporate Development, which is run by EVP, Corporate Development *Thomas Cullen*, who has been with EchoStar for nearly two decades. As for Hughes, *Charlie Ergen* will take over his responsibilities as Principal Executive Officer. Akhavan will be available to consult with EchoStar and Hughes through the end of the year.

COMCAST-APCO: THIRD TIME'S A CHARM?

Here we go again! On Tuesday, **Comcast** filed its third complaint at the **FCC** against **Appalachian Power Company** (APCo), claiming the utility isn't following the law when it comes to pole replacement costs. The operator is asking the Enforcement Bureau to adjudicate the complaint on an expedited basis. It comes after Comcast told the FCC in May that APCo is not complying with a February Commission [order](#) and continues to seek exorbitant fees. The two have argued back and forth over what the FCC order means. The FCC found that when a utility-owned pole has pre-existing safety violations or repair requirements, it can't charge a broadband provider the full cost of replacement. APCo said Comcast [doesn't appreciate](#) the nuances of the order, including the consideration of the loading capacity created by the pole replacements at issue.

MOFFETTNATHANSON INITIATES SPACEX AT \$131

MoffettNathanson has a new frontier, introducing its new space coverage sector Tuesday by initiating **SpaceX** at "neutral" with a target price of \$131. That's not based on a \$2 trillion valuation (a figure the firm said no credible financial model can support) or its claims of a total addressable market of almost \$30 trillion ("absurd"). Even its D2D mobility forecasts appear overblown to the analysts, who see that as more of a niche market. Instead, MoffettNathanson opines that SpaceX's value rests on the unknown. "The idea of orbital data centers was not even on the radar screen just a year ago. We certainly are not going to start modeling asteroid mining or Mars colonization," the firm said. "To focus just on the businesses enumerated today—the known knowns, and even the known unknowns—is, again, to miss the point. SpaceX has been rightly compared to an option, albeit one that is impossible to value using any quantitative option valuation tool. It is, in short, a bet on any and all things made possible by a virtual lock on rocket manufacturing and launch." That sort of monopoly is also a regulatory risk, the firm adds, but one "far, far down the road." *Julie Zhu*, who joined MoffettNathanson in October, is taking lead on the sector. *Nick Del Deo* will lead the analysis of SpaceX's AI infrastructure businesses, while *Craig Moffett* will head up the analysis of SpaceX's connectivity businesses.

FOX SETS SOCCER MILESTONE DESPITE U.S. LOSS

It turns out the U.S. needed a lot more than overturning *Folarin Balogun*'s red card to overcome Belgium on Monday night. And while **Fox** is happy to set the most-watched soccer broadcast in U.S. history, it's a tough pill for fans to swallow when 30 million people tuned in to a 4-1 shellacking, according to **Nielsen**'s early fast nationals data. Viewership peaked during the 9:15-30pm ET window with 36.9 million viewers. Good timing (not)—that was when a catastrophic error from U.S. goalkeeper *Matt Freese* allowed Belgium to extend its lead to 3-1. We'll stay tuned for Fox to release the final figures, as well as the top-rated markets.

COMCAST'S COLLEGE STUDENT OFFERS

Comcast launched a new Xfinity Internet promo aimed at university students living off-campus. Eligible students can get 1 Gig speeds for \$50/month for a year. That package also includes **Peacock** Premium for two years and a \$200 virtual prepaid Mastercard. There's a \$35/month 500 Mbps plan for one year that also comes with a \$100 Mastercard. These offers are also eligible for [same-day WiFi service](#) recently launched by the operator.

SPECTRUM MOBILE'S WIFI 7 UPGRADE

Charter is upgrading the **Spectrum Mobile** network with new outdoor WiFi 7 access points utilizing the 6 GHz band, starting in several cities across California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas, with plans to deploy these access points across its footprint. The update allows customers to seamlessly access faster speeds and improved reliability, including in high-traffic areas such as entertainment venues and restaurants. Spectrum Mobile phones automatically connect to WiFi 7 when near one of these access points.

NBCU'S GAMING FUTURE?

NBCUniversal is [reportedly](#) considering getting into the video game business after it completes the planned split from **Comcast** and analysis firm **LightShed Partners** has a few [suggestions](#) regarding which gaming companies may be M&A targets. While NBCU has partnered with Nintendo on two "Super Mario Bros." movies and theme parks, the firm called an acquisition of the Japanese game maker a "pipe dream," writing that "media companies have never proven they can run games businesses" and that Nintendo would want to protect its valuable intellectual property from being exploited by NBCU. "That is before considering the practical challenges. Nintendo is already a far larger company than NBCU and has no need to sell," the firm added. Other targets NBCU could consider are Riot Games, the studio behind popular esports title "League of Legends," and Roblox, the tech company behind the user-generated gaming platform of the same name. But the "most practical deal" in LightShed's eyes would be "Grand Theft Auto" publisher Take-Two Interactive, arguing that its scale, sports franchises and the "entertainment flywheel" NBCU could build around its properties makes it a good fit. But LightShed also questioned whether gaming is the right move for a post-spinoff NBCU. "[Gaming] has not exactly been a growth business," the firm said.

CURIOSITYSTREAM'S GERMANY PLAY

CuriosityStream completed a deal with **Spiegel TV** and **Autentic** to gain sole ownership of its German unit. The streamer said the move "marks the next phase" in its global growth strategy. Its German portfolio includes an SVOD, two pay TV channels and a FAST channel. The company plans to streamline operations in the country and further integrate German assets across its broader organization. In 2021, the company partnered with Spiegel TV and Autentic to launch the Curiosity brand in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

LUMEN'S ALKIRA DEAL

Lumen closed its acquisition of enterprise cloud networking platform **Alkira**. The fiber infrastructure builder and network-as-a-service provider said the addition strengthens its cloud connectivity services and its ability to support "the rapid growth of data moving between clouds, data centers and AI infrastructure." Integrating Alkira's tech as a Lumen Connect solution will result in a "more programmable, AI-ready network experience." The deal comes as Lumen is also making moves on the infrastructure front, recently embarking on a multi-year buildout to add 34 million new intercity fiber miles by the end of 2028 to support the AI economy.

PROGRAMMING

Spectrum News NY1 launched "Out of Office with The Mayor," a new interview series featuring Errol Louis in conversation with NYC Mayor **Zohran Mamdani** across the city's five boroughs. The first installment airs on Thursday during "Inside City Hall" at 7pm. – **UPtv** will debut the procedural series "Blue Skies" on Aug. 13 at 9pm. The show follows a criminal investigator who works with a stray Labrador named Blue to protect a national park. – "The Chelsea Detective" will return for Season 4 with four all-new eps on Aug. 3 on **Acorn TV**.



INDUSTRY SOURCE

GUEST COLUMN BY LOU BORRELLI

Lou Borrelli is the CEO of the National Content & Technology Cooperative (NCTC), which represents more than 700 broadband and cable operators operating in all 50 states and the U.S. territories serving 40 million video and broadband connections. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of CFX.

WHY THE INDEPENDENT SHOW MATTERS NOW

The future of independent broadband will not be defined by who can imagine the most change. It will be defined by who can make change easier to execute.

That is why this moment matters. Broadband demand keeps growing. Customers expect connectivity to work seamlessly across every room, screen and device. Larger competitors are bundling broadband, mobile, video and other services into more complete customer relationships. AI is moving from a future-facing concept to an operational question. Video is being reshaped by changing rights, platforms and consumer habits.

For independent providers, the pressure is not simply to keep up. It is to decide what is worth doing, how to do it well and how to avoid adding complexity faster than value.

That is the larger purpose behind The Independent Show, taking place July 26-29, 2026, at Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resorts in Walt Disney World. This year's theme, Imagination Meets Innovation, reflects what independents do best: pair big thinking with practical execution. The show will bring that idea to life in several tangible ways:

- **Practical AI:** A Marketing Innovators Group workshop will give NCTC members a hands-on look at AI, while Noelle Russell of the AI Leadership Institute will share how independents can use AI to strengthen operations, support customers and stay competitive.

- **Mobile as part of broadband:** Sessions on mobile adoption, device strategy and bundling frameworks will address one of the clearest competitive realities in the market. Customers increasingly expect mobile to be part of the connectivity relationship. The opportunity is to make mobile a practical extension of broadband, not a separate business that overwhelms the operation.

- **Converged networks and video strategy:** Discussions around network optimization, fiber, Wi-Fi, mobile and video will focus on how services work together to improve the customer experience and retention. Jimmy Zaskowski of Disney Entertainment and ESPN will add perspective on sports, distribution and the economics shaping the video marketplace.

- **Policy and generational change:** FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty will join ACA Connects President and CEO Grant Spellmeyer for a fireside chat on issues tied to broadband expansion, investment and rural communities. David and Jonah Stillman will examine how generational differences influence technology adoption, culture, and team dynamics.

Just as important, The Independent Show is built for connection. The user groups, peer discussions, exhibit floor and EPCOT welcome gathering are not side benefits. They are central to why the event matters now.

Independent providers need time with people who understand the same operational pressures, customer expectations and market decisions. They need to compare notes with peers, hear what is actually working, and talk candidly about what is not. A panel can spark an idea, but a hallway conversation with another operator can often turn that idea into a practical next step.

That kind of networking is not just social. It is strategic.

No provider should have to navigate convergence, AI, mobile, network investment, video disruption and policy change alone. Independence has never meant isolation. At its best, it means having the freedom to serve local communities in distinct ways while gaining access to shared learning, collective scale and trusted solutions.

That is how we build the easier way forward.

The future of independent broadband will be defined by clarity, collaboration and the ability to make innovation useful. If we bring those pieces together, independents will not simply adapt to the next phase of competition. They will help lead it.