CFX DAILY
WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2026
VOLUME 37 | NO. 124
CABLEFAX.COM

EX-FCC COMMISSIONERS TALK SLAUGHTER

A **Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council** panel featuring former **FCC** commissioners Thursday couldn't have been more timely, coming shortly after the **U.S. Supreme Court**'s *Trump v. Slaughter* decision allowing the president to fire members of historically independent agencies.

"I suspect the next Democratic president is going to fire almost every Republican commissioner at all the so-called independent agencies or whatever you want to call them these days. They're just going to clean house," said *Michael O'Rielly*, who served as a Republican commissioner from 2013-2020 (he's also a monthly columnist for ***CFX***). "You can't put the genie back in the bottle on any of these issues—broadcasting, how the commission operates, independent agencies, name the issue."

Reed Hundt, who served as FCC Chair from 1993-1997, quipped that he enjoyed hearing his Republican colleagues tell him what Dems are going to do. "Being a card-carrying Democrat, I know that we are the least organized and most incoherent group that I've ever met. There's absolutely no way to predict," he said.

The *Bill Clinton* appointee thinks there's a bigger issue at play that the current administration will answer within the next 6-12 months: what happens to the estimated 400,000 administrators in the U.S. government? "Are they all at will, and the president can fire all of them, or are they protected by civil service?" Hundt asked. "What Slaughter as a decision signifies is this question is now going to be answered, and the Supreme Court has a majority that will probably support the current president's answer to this question."

Hundt actually downplayed the issue of whether or not agencies will have a multi-member bipartisan commission going forward, saying there are already agencies like **EPA** that operate with a single administrator. "You could do it either way, but what about the civil service? The United States government, in a nutshell, is about 20 to 25% of the economy in terms of revenue coming in and money going out. It has to have an administrative capacity," Hundt said.

The SCOTUS decision has ramped up speculation on what will happen to *Anna Gomez*, the current FCC's lone Democrat whose term expired June 30. That puts her in holdover mode, letting her retain her seat until the end of 2027 or until a successor is seated or Trump renominates her. "Will she be reappointed? I have heard, and I will not reveal my sources, the conversation saying actually having her there is better. It makes for better items that come out," said *Robert McDowell*, a Republican who served at the FCC from 2006-2013. He's been in Gomez's shoes, serving as the one minority commissioner in a three-member FCC with Democrats *Julius Genachowski* and *Mignon Clyburn* for about four months in 2012. "I would hope it would be bipartisan because… that was lovely with just the three of us."

DID YOU KNOW?

Yes, there's still soccer to be played after the U.S. crashed out of the World Cup, although it's hard to imagine another matchup eclipsing the 30 million viewer line that Monday's U.S. vs Belgium match crossed on Fox (at least per early Nielsen data).

Hundt said that it was in Clinton's interest to pursue bipartisanship, saying he worked to occupy a middle ground between the two parties after the GOP won Congress in 1994 and was able to triangulate his way to re-election in 1996. "Consistent with that strategy, when the '96 Telecommunications Act was enacted at the beginning of that election year, it was important for the FCC to implement its four dozen rulemakings with unanimous bipartisan votes," he added. "Perhaps the next president also will choose bipartisanship, but also Congress could rewrite the laws creating multi-member commissions in ways that challenge the court's commitment to greater presidential power. It could dramatically change the structure and function of the FCC, and whether to ask for those changes is going to be one of the key jobs of the president in 2029."

Democrat *Jonathan Adelstein*, who served from 2002-2009 on the FCC, reminded everyone how Republicans were outraged when then-President *Obama* exerted pressure on his FCC Chair *Tom Wheeler* over net neutrality, declaring back then that the FCC was an independent agency before changing their tune in the Slaughter case. "It's funny how the two parties look so much alike these days, don't they? They're both big government now, aren't they?" said McDowell.

O'Rielly said a lot of what lies ahead actually goes back to a decision the late Democratic Majority Leader *Harry Reid* made in 2013 that eliminated the threshold for executive and most judicial confirmations from 60 votes to a simple majority. "Now we have a 50-vote threshold and we're going to do them by blocks and groups so you're going to be able to move people quicker," he said. "You're not going to get the background check you did and you're not going to need to get someone from the other side to approve them."

CPUC'S CHARTER-COX MERGER CONDITIONS

The **California Public Utilities Commission**'s administrative law judge's proposed decision approving **Charter**-**Cox**'s $34.5 billion merger has been issued with several conditions attached to it. It proposes 20 modifications to settlement agreements and five additional conditions. Those include covering rental equipment for low-income customers, a three-year deployment requirement of FTTH or DOCSIS 4.0, an $8.5 million performance bond and funding of existing community investment programs at the current level for 10 years. Commissioner *Matthew Baker* put forth an alternative proposed decision that would approve the deal with only minor clarifications to the settlements already negotiated with the **Public Advocates Office (Cal Advocates)** and the **California Emerging Technology Fund**. Baker's version clarifies that existing price-for-life contracts must be honored and adds some targeted protections around equipment upgrade and downgrade rules. Guess which proposal Charter likes best? "We appreciate that Commissioner Baker's proposed decision largely reflects the strong consumer commitments in our settlements with the Public Advocates Office and the California Emerging Technology Fund – two organizations with a proven record of protecting Californians. As **Verizon** did in its **Frontier** transaction, we'll use California's established process to address any remaining concerns," Charter said in a statement. "The record is clear: consumers, community leaders, and businesses across California strongly back this transaction for its lower prices, greater value, better service, and support from Charter's 100% U.S.-based employees." Neither proposal is the rule of the land as the Commis-

CFX Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC.
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sion will have to vote on a decision. It could approve one of the proposals, modify them or write its own. A 30-day waiting period after the proposals' release means a vote could come as soon as next month, something Charter and Cox have been pushing for. California is the only regulatory hurdle before the deal can close.

NOW OPEN: MOST POWERFUL WOMEN NOMINATIONS

Is there a powerful woman you think is transforming the future of connectivity, media or technology and should be recognized? Look no further. Entries for the 2026 **CFX Most Powerful Women Awards** are now available. ***CFX*** is on the hunt to shine the spotlight on impactful leaders across the broadband and media ecosystem. That includes cable operators, broadcast networks, streaming platforms, fiber providers, ad tech, sports and emerging technology. Nominations are due Aug. 7, before the final deadline ends a week later Aug. 14. Visit here to learn more about categories, sponsorships, the Most Powerful Women Awards gala and—most importantly—how to enter.

MMTC NOTEBOOK

AI was heavy on the minds of ex-**FCC** Commissioners at Thursday's **MMTC** panel. "The FCC must rethink how transparency, authenticity and public interest obligations function in a world where content… is no longer 100% human generated," said *Mignon Clyburn*. Her fellow Democratic colleague *Reed Hundt* went further, wondering if Congress will ask the FCC to regulate AI since it uses the airwaves to gather data. He suggested that could include barring AI messages to children, regulating copyright infringement, or even requiring the communications industry to use AI to eliminate spam. *Robert McDowell* said there's very limited federal authority to regulate AI right now, adding that comprehensive, federal AI legislation is needed but difficult to get to—look at the lack of a national privacy framework. That's why states are stepping in—with Clyburn and *Mike O'Rielly* taking somewhat opposing views on whether state regs should be pre-empted. "I just strongly feel that any type of preemption without a coherent national AI framework that protects innovation in America's underserved and rural communities is a no-go," Clyburn said. Pessimistic that national AI legislation will happen, McDowell thinks some of it will happen through government contracts and possibly executive action. – On broadcast, McDowell suggested that the vast increase in media sources means it's time for a re-examination of the **Supreme Court**'s landmark 1969 Red Lion decision that is the foundational rationale for the FCC to regulate broadcast content due to spectrum scarcity. Clyburn warned that just because there are more media platforms—many digital—not everyone has access. While she didn't call for more government regulation of broadcasters, she said it needs to be a "backstop" to protect the most vulnerable. "For the everyday people who are struggling every day, what access to information do they have?" she asked. "Certain people are going to rise, and they're going to have access regardless because they have means."

NEXSTAR-TENGA MERGER COURT BATTLE LATEST

A California judge has set July 6, 2027, as the trial date for 13 state AGs and **DirecTV**'s challenge of **Nexstar** and **Tegna**'s $6.2 billion merger. A scheduling doc Thursday estimates a trial length of 15 days. The order gave April 2, 2027, as a deadline for informing the court if parties elect to mediate or attend a settlement conference. Meanwhile, the **D.C. Circuit** on Thursday granted the **FCC**'s request to dismiss a case brought by state broadband associations, DirecTV and others that sought to have the court force the FCC to review a **Media Bureau** decision approving the merger. The FCC argued that the challenge was filed prematurely and that it's considering the order and expects to rule on it by year-end. The court said the appellants have failed to show irreparable and certain harm, particularly in light of a preliminary injunction in California that's keeping the two entities largely separate as litigation continues. Meanwhile, late Wednesday, Nexstar filed its reply brief in the **9th Circuit Court of Appeals**, where it's seeking to have the preliminary injunction overturned. "DirecTV and the State AGs are peddling the fiction that this lawsuit is about protecting local media and viewers when it is actually a cynical attempt to advance their own commercial and political interests," a Nexstar spokesperson said. "This lawsuit is rooted in an outdated view of the media space and wastes precious taxpayer dollars to protect private equity-owned DirecTV, while giving Big Tech and streaming platforms a free pass. Every day this overbroad injunction remains in place, it starves local broadcast stations of the investment they need while undermining the local journalism it purports to protect."

WARN NOTICES HIT CHARTER, FOX DEPORTES

Data released Thursday from the **Labor Department** show unemployment benefit applications dipped by 2,000 to 215,000, with layoffs in the U.S. at historically low levels. That doesn't mean the industry is immune. A perusal through recent state WARN notices shows a few involving industry players. **Charter** sent notice about its Network Operations Center in Town and Country, Missouri, that's expected to impact 107 employees, mostly network engineers, on Sept. 8. No customer-facing employees are impacted, with Charter outsourcing some of the back-office roles in Town and Country as well as in Louisville and Austin, to Capgemini. Affected employees in all those markets are being offered a comparable role at the same location for at least the next eight months. On June 30, **Fox Deportes** informed California of layoffs expected to impact 133 employees in L.A. on Sept. 1. We're told about 70% of those impacted are freelancers who had been engaged with Fox Deportes within the last year. This move comes as Fox Deportes and **Fox Latin America** are being integrated into a single Fox Latin America organization, with production operations moving to Mexico over the next 60 days.

DISNEY'S SLING LAWSUIT DEADLINE

A federal court in New York has given **Disney** until Monday to confirm whether or not it agrees that its case against **Dish Network**'s **Sling TV** flexible streaming passes should be stayed in light of **Dish DBS**' pending bankruptcy proceeding. Earlier this week, Dish told the court that the Chapter 11 filing results in an automatic stay under U.S. Bankruptcy Code. **ESPN**/Disney is Dish DBS' fourth-largest creditor at about $69.4 million in unsecured claims (typically unpaid carriage fees). Disney sued in August 2025 over the short-term streaming subscriptions Sling launched, offering 24-hour, three-day and seven-day passes to Sling Orange, which includes linear nets ESPN, **CNN**, **TNT**, **TBS**, **Disney Channel** and **Comedy Central**.

FIFA PREPS FOR WORLD CUP RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

The 2026 **World Cup** might only be in the quarterfinal phase, but it's never too early to talk about the next edition of the men's tournament in 2030—and who might be broadcasting the matches. While **Fox Sports** and **NBCU/Telemundo** have enjoyed substantial ratings bumps this past month, the U.S. English- and Spanish-language rights for the men's World Cup are up for grabs once the final concludes July 19. Per **CNBC**, which cites people familiar with the matter, **FIFA** is expected to package both the English- and Spanish-language rights together when it begins negotiating for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups within the next few months. Netflix, the holder of the 2027 and 2031 Women's World Cups, as well as **Disney**, **YouTube**, **Amazon** and **Apple** are expected to compete with **Fox**'s bid to retain the rights, along with **Paramount** and **NBCU**. Fox first won the English-language rights in 2011, paying $425 million for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments before it was eventually given the 2026 running (bringing the price up to $485 million, according to *The Athletic*). Telemundo's price tag—also struck in 2011—is reportedly near $600 million. CNBC notes that the next round of negotiations could see men's World Cup rights tick up to the $1.5-2 billion range. It's setting up to be a battle between traditional media companies and streaming giants (and a timely test-drive next summer for putting a global spectacle exclusively on streaming).

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*
(06/29/26-07/05/26)

MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	**0.769**	**2477**
MS NOW	**0.375**	**1208**
FS1	**0.310**	**999**
HGTV	**0.214**	**688**
CNN	**0.191**	**614**
TBS	**0.188**	**604**
HIST	**0.151**	**486**
ESPN	**0.149**	**478**
TLC	**0.135**	**434**
GSN	**0.133**	**427**
HALL	**0.127**	**408**
FOOD	**0.125**	**403**
INSP	**0.125**	**402**
A&E	**0.115**	**371**
TV LAND	**0.112**	**361**
DISC	**0.105**	**337**
ID	**0.100**	**323**
BRAVO	**0.089**	**286**
USA	**0.087**	**281**
OXY	**0.083**	**266**
HALLMYS	**0.080**	**256**
NAN	**0.076**	**246**
BET	**0.074**	**237**
TNT	**0.070**	**227**
WETV	**0.068**	**219**
LIFE	**0.061**	**197**
NWSMX	**0.061**	**195**
FX	**0.055**	**178**
IFC TV	**0.055**	**177**
FETV	**0.054**	**175**
SYFY	**0.054**	**172**
MLB	**0.053**	**171**
FRFM	**0.052**	**167**
AMC	**0.050**	**162**
MGNLA	**0.050**	**162**
COM	**0.050**	**161**
UNIVERSO	**0.050**	**160**
SNDNCE	**0.049**	**158**
ADSM	**0.045**	**146**
LMN	**0.044**	**141**
FXX	**0.044**	**141**
TRAVEL	**0.043**	**139**
E!	**0.043**	**139**
NATGEO	**0.043**	**139**
APL	**0.043**	**137**
NWSNTN	**0.043**	**137**

**P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.*