

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Top Four: ATVA, Common Cause Stand Against Apollo Acquisitions

Opponents of **Apollo Global Management's** proposal to purchase **Cox Enterprises'** TV and radio stations as well as **Northwest Broadcasting's** stations came out of the woodwork Monday. The proposal would see **Terrier Media**, a newly-formed company controlled by Apollo, become the 100% indirect parent of the licensees. Upon completion of the deal, Apollo's Terrier Media would own 25 full-power television stations covering 12.949% of US TV households, without taking into account the UHF discount. **Common Cause**, **Common Cause Ohio** and **United Church of Christ, OC Inc** joined together to file a petition to deny the transaction, telling the **FCC** that the deal would bring about significant public interest harms to broadcast localism and viewpoint diversity. They showed particular concern for the Dayton DMA, where Cox currently owns the *Dayton Daily News*, **WHIO** broadcast television station and four radio stations. "Throughout the course of its ownership, Cox has brought the newspaper, television station, and radio stations under one roof. This consolidation has led to reporter layoffs and less robust coverage of local news," the petition read. "People in the Dayton community say they know more about what is going on in Akron and Toledo than they do in Dayton." The **American Television Alliance** filed comments on the application, saying that it is designed to extend Northwest's high retransmission consent rates to other broadcast stations. "If the Commission approves this proposed transaction, Apollo will purchase Northwest and then purchase Cox," ATVA said. "Because of after-acquired-station clauses in Northwest's contracts, this will cause Cox's rates to 'reset' to Northwest's higher rates for MVPDs carrying both sets of stations." ATVA proposed that the Commission require the applicants to file a full public-interest statement addressing the harms and benefits of the transaction, including an analysis of the impact of a top-four quadropoly in Greenville, MS, and that the public be given an opportunity to file on that statement. "The Commission then will have a full opportunity to weigh the public-interest harms against the benefits of one broadcaster owning all four of the top-four stations in market," ATVA said. While the ATVA is concerned about the Local Television Ownership Rule, the applicants have claimed that with the exception of the Yuma-El Centro market, there are no new or existing station combinations from the transactions that would implicate the rule. In the case of Yuma-El Centro, AZ, where Apollo would acquire an existing top-four combination from Northwest, the two are looking to get around the rule by showing that the top-four combination would result in a minimal reduction in competition.

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**On the Job:** Work on closing the digital divide continues, and there's now a group of 17 House members dedicated to getting the job done. House majority whip *James Clyburn* (D-SC) launched a new task force on rural broadband Monday as a way to offer coordination and leadership to the cause. The ultimate goal would be to advance solutions that would give all Americans affordable access to high-speed internet by 2025. The task force comes soon after the announcement of a bipartisan agreement with *President Trump* to develop a \$2 trillion infrastructure bill, a piece of legislation that's expected to include significant funding for rural broadband deployment.

**Upfront Season:** Comcast NBCU put its talent front and center at its upfront in NYC on Monday, with "Late Night" host *Seth Meyers* hinting that the name of the company's upcoming streaming service may be revealed shortly. "In 2020, NBCUniversal will be coming out with its video streaming service, which they're now referring to as 'OTT,' which by 2022 will stand for 'Ohhhh, That Thing,'" he joked. "Seriously, though. It's time to come up with a name for the streaming service. This is like when people still haven't named their kid two weeks after it was born. 'This is Baby' does not reflect badly on the kid, but it makes the parents look a little weird. It's also, like, what's taking you so long? It's going to be something like NBC Plus or NBC Gold, right? We're not going to call it something crazy like Apollo Sword or **Hulu**." If it's up to Meyers, Comcast's name won't be in the service's title at all. "Let me say, if you're deciding between the two, I'd use NBC in the name and not Comcast. I mean, they're both great companies. It's just, no one's ever had to wait four hours for the NBC guy to show up," he quipped. On a more serious note, ad sales chief *Linda Yaccarino* gave some more hints on what we can expect from the platform. "At NBCUniversal, we're taking the long view and investing in what the future of advertising will look like," she said. "Our new ad-supported streaming platform will be available by mid-next year. An unprecedented investment in data, technology and content, including everything you saw today on a scale you can't possibly imagine... While other companies are pushing advertisers out, we're bringing them in. It will have a slate of originals and a gigantic library of all favorites. The shows that people love the most and stream the most are coming home at a price that every person can afford: free." She referred to beloved "The Office" characters Jim and Pam by name, so it looks like NBC's biggest titles are headed back home. The Office is currently the most-watched show on **Netflix** in terms of minutes consumed. The star-studded presentation also included appearances from *Tina Fey*, *Amy Poehler* and *Ted Danson*, as well as a musical performance from the four judges of "The Voice." The company also highlighted 13 female Olympic gold medalists, previewing 2020 coverage and its exclusive 2028 deal.

**Sharing Spectrum:** Federated Wireless announced Monday it has completed the rollout of its environmental sensing capability network, marking another step forward in the race to commercially deploy CBRS services. The ESC

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network is composed of sensors along US coastlines. When it comes to the 150Mhz of shared spectrum available in the 3.5Ghz CBRS band, the ESC network ensures that incumbent transmissions, including those from the **US Navy**, are interference-free. Certification and full automation in the CBRS market is expected later this year while licensed CBRS spectrum is expected to be made available in early 2020.

**Kick Off:** **Major League Soccer** is launching a new channel on **Viacom**-owned streamer **Pluto TV**. The MLS channel will feature premium soccer content, classic matches, highlights, and a slate of original programming including shows “The Movement” and “The Birth of a Rivalry,” MLS’s flagship series about the passion of new rivalries. “Establishing our first league offering with a renowned and respected organization like the MLS is the perfect match,” said *Amy Kuessner*, svp, content partnerships, Pluto TV. “Expanding Pluto TV’s sports offerings has long been a goal of the platform, and we’re proud to kick that off with the most popular game in the world.”

**Apple Update:** The new **Apple TV** app is now available in over 100 countries on iPhone, iPad, Apple TV and some **Samsung** smart TVs. With the free software update, customers can subscribe to Apple TV channels with the app on an a la carte basis, including **HBO**, **Starz**, **Showtime**, **EPIX** and more. The redesigned app was first announced at the company’s event back in March, and it will be where Apple TV+ launches with Apple’s upcoming original programming.

**Country Living:** **Comcast** announced plans to significantly upgrade and expand its networks in areas of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The effort will pass approximately 4500 rural homes with 119 miles of new fiber construction, covering all current customers in Fayette County, PA, most of its customers in Preston County, WV, and five municipalities in Somerset County, PA. Those customers will receive access to the X1 platform and all Xfinity services as well as the full suite of Comcast Business products. Comcast is also completing an extension in Belmont County, Ohio to serve more than 250 rural homes and businesses in the area.

**Talk It Out:** **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* is holding a summit on the industry’s implementation of SHAKEN/STIR, a caller ID authentication framework that combats robocalls. Pai expects major phone providers to implement the authentication standards by the end of this year. The summit, to be held on July 11 at FCC HQ, will also examine any technical challenges that continue to block deployment. Summit participants, specific discussion topics and times will be announced in a future public notice. -- The FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau is holding a webinar discussing network reliability and security resources for small and rural providers offering wireline, interconnected VoIP, cable, satellite and wireless services. Kicking off at 11am on June 17, the webinar will cover topics including best practices for network resiliency and recent updates to the FCC’s Network Outage Reporting System and Disaster Information Reporting System.

**Tee Time:** **Discovery** acquired **Golf Digest** from **Condé Nast**, extending Discovery’s global golf media business to the US through Golf Digest’s multi-platform distribution and reach. Golf Digest will be added to **GOLFTV**’s offerings.

**News Hour:** **UniMás** is significantly expanding its local news coverage, beginning Monday. “Noticias 23 on UniMás” will air three live half-hour newscasts Mon-Fri at 5pm, 5:30pm and 10pm.

**Prime Time:** **Cox** Contour customers now have access to Amazon Prime Video. Customers will be able to access Prime Video through an app or by saying “Prime Video” into the Contour voice remote.

**Carriage:** **FETV** (Family Entertainment Television) is now available to **Comcast** subs in Michigan markets (Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, Lansing) and Spokane, WA. The move increases the net’s total distribution by more than 800K households.

**On the Fly:** More than 200 cable industry execs from the across the country are in DC this week to meet with members of Congress as part of **NCTA**’s annual Key Contact Conference. Execs will discuss industry investments to bring fast broadband all around America, a preview of 10G, tech-neutral federal online privacy framework, and the importance of additional spectrum.

**Ratings:** **ESPN** and **ABC** are seeing their highest-rated **NBA** Conference Semifinals since 2012, according to **Nielsen**. The pair averaged a 4.2 metered market rating across 11 game telecasts, up from a 3.5 rating last season and a 3.4 in 2017.

**Programming:** **USA** is rebooting “The Biggest Loser” and revamping the unscripted series. The 10-ep season is expected to debut in 2020. -- The upcoming season of **Food Network**’s “The Great Food Truck Race” is sticking to the East Coast. Premiering June 9 at 9pm, the series will see nine teams of food truck owners facing off for a \$50K grand prize. -- **Smithsonian Channel** will premiere three-part series “Atomic Age Declassified” on June 16 at 9pm. The series dives into recently declassified materials from the mid-20th century.