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# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Oracle O'Rielly: FCC Commissioner Contemplates Our New World

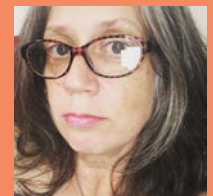
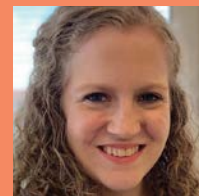
On February 10, well before America started sheltering in place because of COVID-19, FCC commissioner *Mike O'Rielly* gave a speech before the Silicon Flatirons saying he was optimistic technology advances would accelerate, predicting that "instead of traveling to a foreign country or joining a business meeting in person, everyone will be able to do so through virtual portals located wherever the person happens to be at that moment. The disruptive effects could be staggering to large, traditional economic sectors." Is he a soothsayer? In a webcast conversation Thursday with **USTelecom** pres/CEO *Jonathan Spalter*, the Republican commissioner made some more predictions—meetings will become less frequent and more virtual. "The FCC's going to move [to a new HQ] in the next couple months, and now we're facing a new experience," he said. "I'm likely going to spend a lot more time in my house. And I'm probably going to want to modernize so you're not looking at the color of my wall or I have more space. I think I referenced in my [Flatirons] speech holograms, and we're moving towards that." O'Rielly also believes we're possibly moving toward a universe where you don't have subscriptions to any one provider and wireless and wired are interchangeable. "We've talked in the past about business models where you buy in sequence—almost like you do for wireless packages today, a thousand minutes or something like that. I can see a universe very easily where it's interchangeable. If you just need access and you can buy interchangeable components for this block or that block and use whatever technology is out there," he said. While the commissioner acknowledged that the country is still absorbing what this work-from-home shift means for data and traffic patterns, he's hopeful this new technology will help people change their lifestyles and their old definitions of work. "I'm optimistic that we're going to grow from this experience. It's very painful to go through this myself, but I know others are doing the same," he said. Struggling with balancing working from home and childcare? You're not alone. O'Rielly said a lot of the childcare is falling on his shoulders during the pandemic because his wife has more hourly responsibilities. "Hours no longer matter, punching a clock at 9 o'clock... I don't think that's longstanding. You work when you can fit it in," he said. Of course, there are some who are still waiting for broadband—a figure FCC data estimates at 18-20mln. "I've listened to individuals talk about their work life when you have no connectivity or dial-up experiences. I wish we had prioritized that earlier, and I'm glad we're now prioritizing them," O'Rielly said, making a plug for the FCC's upcoming RDOF Phase I auction for \$16bln

# Cablefax

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in broadband funding. “We’re on the right path. It’s going to take more time, more money and more effort.”

**Comcast, Byron Allen Reach Settlement:** Comcast and Byron Allen’s Entertainment Studios Networks have reached a distribution and carriage deal after Allen’s racial bias case against the company went all the way to the Supreme Court. The new agreement extends terms for **The Weather Channel** and 14 broadcast stations, and includes the launch of three ESN channels—**Comedy.TV**, **Recipe.TV** and **JusticeCentral.TV** on X1, including VOD and TV Everywhere rights. Comcast will also launch the free, ad-supported digital app Local NOW on Xfinity X1 and Flex platforms. The companies said the pending litigation between the two had been withdrawn, and financial terms were not disclosed. Allen first filed his claim against Comcast, as well as **Charter**, in 2015, claiming the MVPDs violated the Civil Rights Act of 1966 by refusing to carry ESN’s channels. In March, the Supreme Court sided with Comcast, stating Allen needed to show that racial bias was the only reason that Comcast decided not to carry ESN’s nets. The case had been sent back to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The lawsuit with Charter is still pending.

**Getting the ETC Out of USF:** Rep *GK Butterfield* (D-NC) introduced the “Expanding Opportunities for Broadband Deployment Act,” which eliminates the requirement that only ISPs designated as eligible telecommunications carriers may receive USF dollars. Cable has long been wary of the ETC designation, with it keeping some operators from applying for Connect America Fund II money. Some have expressed concern about ETC status for the \$20bln available through the **FCC**’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. Cable is afraid ETC status could open the door to additional regulation by state public utility commissions. **NCTA** applauded Butterfield’s bill. “By retiring the ETC designation, more ISPs with a proven track record of operating broadband networks would compete for government support,” pres/CEO *Michael Powell* said in a statement. “With Congress considering new strategies to advance access and adoption of broadband across America, now is the time to remove antiquated and unnecessary barriers that deter ISPs from delivering broadband service to every citizen.”

**Pop Prez to Audible:** Pop TV pres *Brad Schwartz* will join **Amazon**’s audiobook company **Audible** on June 15 as chief content officer. The move signals further interest by Audible to move into original content, with CEO *Bob Carrigan* praising Schwartz’s successful track record and relationships in the entertainment community. His departure comes at a time of transition for Pop, which has just bid adieu to signature series “Schitt’s Creek” and been through reorg that saw layoffs as Pop shifted to the **ViacomCBS** Entertainment and Youth Group after last year’s Viacom and CBS merger (Pop was previously part of CBS). Schwartz came to Pop in 2013 when it was still TV Guide Network and led the rebrand. ViacomCBS has moved away from a siloed approach for the Youth & Entertainment

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portfolio, with *Nina Diaz* heading content for the entire portfolio. *Justin Rosenblatt*, who headed up original programming and development for Pop, was recently named svp, alternative and comedy for the E&Y group.

**Evolution of Connected TV:** Consumers' connected TV viewing habits are becoming more similar to traditional linear viewing habits, a report from **Comcast's FreeWheel** found. The whitepaper, "The Power of CTV: Audiences and Engagement," is a follow-up to a 2017 paper on the same topic and dives into how the platform has changed over the years. In 1Q17, only 36% of CTV visits lasted more than an hour. In 3Q19, that number jumped to 61%. In the same quarter, CTV device ad views were up 110% YOY. "What was once an emerging technology is now a destination for premium video viewing, transforming the way content is distributed and monetized," the paper reads. The company found that for all CTV device groups, ad consumption rose gradually throughout the day and reached a high during primetime, replicating the same patterns as linear TV, suggesting that audiences now consider CTV as more than a supplement to linear TV. CTV's average ad completion rate is 97%, indicating high engagement from viewers. Ad spend is projected to pass \$10bln in 2021, and grew 37.6% in 2019.

**Black Lives Matter Update:** **Charter** is investing \$10mln in partnership with the **National Urban League** and the **National Action Network** to support African American and other minority-owned small businesses in underserved communities. The company's Spectrum Community Investment Loan Fund will invest \$3mln across NUL's community development financial institution (CDFI), the Urban Empowerment Fund, and under direction from the NAN, an additional \$3mln in low-interest loans directly to CDFIs. Another \$3.5mln in PSA value will promote its partners' loan funds, and a \$500K capacity grant goes to the NUL. -- **BET** launched a social justice initiative "Content for Change" to help address racial inequalities in America. The \$25mln campaign will focus on racial justice, economic empowerment, education, health and civic participation through creation, distribution, marketing and promotion of content. -- **A&E** canceled "Live PD" amid the *George Floyd* protests. The decision to pull the show came a couple days after Texas media broke the story that the series had destroyed footage of a man dying in custody in 2019. **Paramount Network** had canceled long-running series "Cops" earlier in the week, stating "'Cops' is not on the Paramount Network and we don't have any current or future plans for it to return."

**Cable ONE Deal:** **Cable ONE** has reached a deal to buy Emporia, KS-based **ValuNet Fiber**, pending approval by investors. That's according to a statement issued by ValuNet on its Facebook page. Cable ONE did not return a request for comment by press time. Cable ONE already provides service in the market under its Sparklight brand. ValuNet said the same team that has operated the company since inception in 2011 will remain in place and there are no immediate personnel changes planned for associates. The transaction is expected to close in 3Q.

**Disney+ Grows in UK:** Just three weeks after its launch in the UK, in April **Disney+** became the country's third-largest SVOD service with 4.3mln subs, according to data from **Omdia**.

**Distribution:** **Tubi** partnered with **pCare**, an interactive patient system, to make the streaming platform available to patients admitted for COVID-19. The partnership is part of pCare's new COVID-19 Tablet Configuration Solution which will be implemented by Temple University Health System.

**Programming:** **Discovery** partnered with **Walmart** for an integration partnership for the new **HGTV** series "Design At Your Door." The series will be shot entirely from home, and Walmart products will be integrated via long and short-form original content. The show premieres Thursday at 9pm. -- **HBO Max** marked its first original series renewal with an order for Season 2 of "Love Life." -- **Starz** picked up crime drama "Hightown" for a Season 2. The net said the show had the best performing series premiere across the Starz app and OTT platforms to date, doubling the previous series high in addition to 1.45mln linear viewers. -- **ESPN** and The Basketball Tournament reached a new, multi-year rights extension for the single-elimination tournament. ESPN has had the rights to the games since its creation in 2014. The 23 game tournament will take place July 4-14 in a quarantined environment.

**Honors:** **WICT** announced the 180 designees for its 2020 Rising Leaders Program, which features industry professionals at the manager and director level. Due to the pandemic, class members can choose to participate in the first-ever virtual Rising Leaders Program, scheduled to begin Monday, or attend an in-person program in 2021. A grant from the **Walter Kaitz Foundation** will support six scholarships for RLP designees from smaller companies and industry nonprofits. **Comcast NBCUniversal** is the program's Silver Sponsor. The full list of rising leaders is posted on WICT's [website](#).

**People:** **ViacomCBS** upped *Bruce Gilmer* to pres of music, music talent, programming & events, effective immediately. Gilmer most recently held the title of head of global music and evp, music & talent, programming & events for Viacom International Media Networks.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Celebrating Liberation Day

It was May 1945 when the world came together to defeat Nazi Germany, and **History** is celebrating the 75th anniversary of Liberation Day with “WW2: Race to Victory.” Premiering Sunday at 9pm, the three-part miniseries centers on the complex relationships between *Winston Churchill*, *Franklin Roosevelt* and *Joseph Stalin*.

Though they worked together with the common goal of defeating the Germans under *Adolf Hitler*, each of the three men wanted the power that would ultimately become available when the war was over. **A+E Networks UK** commissioned production company **CIC Media** to produce the factual series. History evp/general manager *Eli Lehrer* told **CFX** that the program fits perfectly into the net’s overall strategy, offering its audience a deeper knowledge on the events of World War II and the iconic wartime leaders at its center. Each of the episodes will center on pivotal moments in World War II, like Stalingrad or the attack on Pearl Harbor, and then backtrack to center on those who were responsible or escaped blame. Folks will also have a chance to hear from some of the soldiers directly involved in those historic moments. Among those featured in the doc are *General Sir Michael Jackson*, the former head of the British Army, and Dutch military commander *Major-General Rudi Hemms*, who served as a junior officer in World War II. A+E Networks UK vp, programming *Dan Korn* said in a statement that the series served as an opportunity “to reflect not only on the enormous sacrifices made by men and women around the world to liberate us from the tyranny of Nazi Germany, but also to explore the secret maneuvering, dealmaking and compromise which went on at the highest level to secure victory but which then precipitated the onset of the Cold War.” – *Sara Winegardner*

**Reviews:** “Frontline, The Virus: What Went Wrong,” 9pm, Tuesday, **PBS**. What could PBS’ excellent documentary series bring to the reportage of the novel coronavirus? In short, a lot. This brief, personal and sober re-telling brings plenty of punch. Perhaps the most chilling, and galling, moments come at the start. It seems clear more than a few mistakes were made in China and here; some seem intentional. In China, authorities withheld evidence of the virus for weeks. Doctors were forbidden to discuss it online, for example. Not all was politics, though. The Chinese celebrate their New Year in late January. A tradition holds that mentioning bad news during New Year’s will bring bad luck throughout the year. Is that why Chinese medical authorities told the public in mid-January that the virus was under control? Perhaps they told the same thing to WHO officials, who tweeted Jan. 14 there was no human-to-human spread. Were Chinese officials lying, coerced or just wrong? And did the US CDC get an accurate read on the virus from China’s CDC? The doc proffers multiple answers to that question. And why did the White House wait two weeks to return the call of HHS chief *Alex Azar*, who was trying to get a meeting to brief the president about the virus? We may never know the truth. – *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (06/01/20-06/07/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	1.256	3,859
CNN	0.799	2,456
MSNBC	0.720	2,213
HGTV	0.439	1,349
TLC	0.359	1,103
TBSC	0.346	1,062
HIST	0.300	921
HALL	0.275	845
DISC	0.273	838
FOOD	0.269	826
USA	0.257	791
INSP	0.230	707
A&E	0.227	699
TNT	0.213	654
HMM	0.208	640
ID	0.199	613
BRAVO	0.189	581
TVLAND	0.175	537
ADSM	0.164	504
GSN	0.143	439
AMC	0.141	432
WETV	0.140	430
NICK	0.134	410
SYFY	0.132	406
APL	0.128	394
NAN	0.127	390
MTV	0.126	388
TRAVEL	0.122	375
NATGEO	0.122	373
LIFE	0.121	373
FX	0.111	341
NKJR	0.105	324
OXY	0.104	318
ESPN	0.103	316
DSNY	0.103	315
LMN	0.101	311
DIY	0.100	308
DSJR	0.099	305
PARA	0.098	301
COM	0.097	297
BET	0.095	290

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



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