

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

TEGNA-Standard General: Unions Say Docs Raise Doubts about Job Cuts

Additional confidential documents that the **FCC** compelled **Standard General** and **TEGNA** to submit in their \$5.4 billion merger confirm “substantial doubts” over Standard General’s claims it doesn’t intend to cut jobs at TEGNA stations once the deal closes, the unions fighting the transaction said.

“Twelve sophisticated banks funding the transaction appear to have relied on Standard General presentations that showed it would realize prospective cost savings from station-level job cuts,” the **CWA’s News Guild** and the **National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians** said in an FCC filing last week. “Significantly, Standard General repeated these assertions as late as May, 2022. This time line contradicts Standard General’s subsequent effort to say that the intended job cutting had already been implemented by TEGNA.”

Standard General said the unions raise nothing new in this latest filing. “After being given unprecedented access to thousands of additional confidential documents, the NewsGuild has responded with only the same disproven and misleading claim. Its claim relies primarily on the confidential documents Standard General provided several months ago, which the NewsGuild did not find worthy of even a mention in its petition or reply in this proceeding,” the company said. “Standard General has repeatedly confirmed, including in the record under penalty of perjury and directly to the employees of TEGNA, that it has no intention of reducing station news

or journalism jobs, or, indeed, station staffing more generally. Standard General has a proven record of increasing investment in local journalism. The NewsGuild continues to abuse the regulatory process with fabrications of the facts and double down on its baseless opposition to what will be the largest women-led and minority-owned station group in the country.”

Last month, the FCC Media Bureau asked the broadcast companies to submit all documents, including presentations to **Apollo Global Management** and any other financial lending or investment institutions, addressing each company’s evaluation of the transaction (as well as alternative transactions considered among the companies). Standard General and TEGNA had to submit the info by Oct. 13. The supplemental information isn’t publicly available, but parties in the docket that signed NDAs have access to the info and were able to supplement their filings by Oct. 27.

The unions were the only parties to supplement their pleadings, though other parties, including **Altice USA** and the **American Television Alliance**, have had meetings in recent weeks with FCC staffers to discuss the deal. During video conferences, Altice USA discussed its desire to see retransmission consent conditions addressed in any merger approval. “We believe a distinction can be made between situations in which a party that negotiated the clause benefits from it and situations, such as here, where a third-party later ‘commandeers’ such benefits for itself,” Altice USA said in an ex parte describing the meetings.

Cablefax
MOST POWERFUL WOMEN
Celebration Luncheon

Thursday, December 8 | 11am - 2pm
 Edison Ballroom, NYC

Join us as we salute the women who have made their mark on the industry with their leadership and innovation.

Register Your Team at
www.CablefaxWomen.com

In this case, Standard General has acquired a single Boston station from **Cox/Apollo**, with MVPDs concerned that it will apply the retrans consent rates of the single Cox station to all 97 TEGNA stations it stands to acquire. “Cox itself will not get to apply the after-acquired station clauses it negotiated with MVPDs. Rather, Standard General has commandeered a clause it did not negotiate in order to raise prices,” Altice said.

The News Guild and News Broadcast Employees and Technicians unions also have concerns over retrans implications: “This would jack up revenues from retransmission consent fees for every TEGNA station across the country, the costs of which would be passed on to hardworking consumers. This financial manipulation is nothing more than sophisticated and collusive price-fixing, and absolutely should not be permitted.”

NewStreet Research’s Blair Levin made his best assumptions on the filing, which isn’t easy since it’s based largely on redacted info. His take is that it doesn’t increase the odds of the Commission denying the deal or sending it to an administrative law judge, but it does strengthen the leverage of the Union and the FCC in seeking conditions related to jobs and limiting price increases. “As a result of that increased leverage, it increases the odds of the deal not going forward for financial reasons, rather than a pure government block,” NewStreet told clients. “While we are not in a position to assess the specifics of when and how the financial backers would argue that the delay and proposed conditions represent a material adverse change that allows them to walk from the deal, the longer this goes on and the greater the economic impact of any proposed conditions, the greater the odds that the deal

does not move forward.”

Standard General has until Thursday to respond to the unions’ filing, with it seeming unlikely the merger review will be resolved before the end of the year.

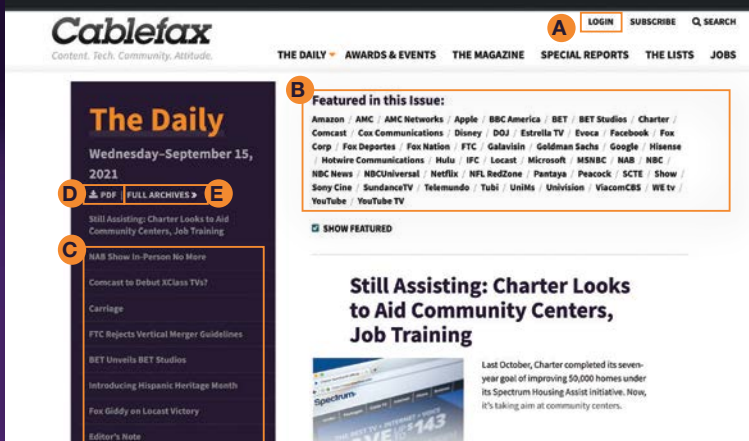
HOTWIRE HIRES FORMER ACAC EXEC LIEBERMAN

Former **ACA Connects** Government Affairs SVP *Ross Lieberman* has joined **Hotwire Communications** as its first-ever SVP of Government Affairs. It’s a brand-new role at Hotwire, and a sign the provider wants to have some serious sway in Washington. Lieberman’s a well-known name inside the Beltway and played a part in shaping the bipartisan infrastructure package with its \$65 billion for broadband, the FCC’s C-band transition plan and Congress extending the good faith rules governing retransmission consent negotiations to buying groups such as NCTC. He spent 15 years at ACAC, leaving at the end of August and joining Hotwire in September (the company just confirmed his hiring Monday). Before joining the small- and medium-operator association, Lieberman spent seven years in government affairs at **DISH Network**.

CHARTER DEBUTS SPECTRUM ONE

Charter announced its Spectrum One offering, which integrates Spectrum Internet, Advanced WiFi and Unlimited Spectrum Mobile to deliver seamless online connectivity in and outside of the home. For new customers, Charter currently is making Spectrum One available for the promotional price of \$49.99/month for 12 months. It includes Spectrum Internet, Advanced WiFi and one free line of Unlimited Spectrum Mobile for a year, for an annual savings over those 12 months of nearly \$420 off regular promotional rates. Charter

Guide to Your Online Cablefax Daily Issues



- A** Subscriber Login: Gain access to every Cablefax Daily story PLUS the archives
- B** Every issue includes a list of companies featured. Easily navigate to the stories by clicking on the company name.
- C** The issue headlines are featured on the left nav bar.
- D** Access the pdf version quickly from the website.
- E** Missed an issue or doing some research? Search Cablefax Daily archives

Subscriptions Available for Groups and Corporate Site Licenses.
 Contact Ellen Kamhi at ekamhi@accessintel.com or www.cablefax.com/subscribe

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

also has lowered the everyday price of Unlimited Spectrum Mobile to \$29.99/month for the first and every Unlimited line (previously \$45/month for a single line of Unlimited). Existing Charter non-Mobile subscribers who switch to Spectrum Mobile and buy an Unlimited line for \$29.99/month will get an additional Unlimited line free for 12 months, a savings of nearly \$360 during the one-year promotional period, while existing Spectrum Mobile customers who add an Unlimited line for \$29.99/month will get an additional line free for 12 months. Charter's also kicked off a massive media campaign for Spectrum One. While the official announcement of the offering came Monday, analysts were asking about it during the company's earnings call last week. "It's our first attempt, and it may evolve over time, but Spectrum One packages [offer] seamless connectivity with our products, and they all work better together. It's offered at a first-year promotional price," COO *Chris Winfrey* said. "We also attach additional products or mobile lines to that promotional selling. So contrary to what I think is maybe a fear, we have not lowered our pricing in the marketplace, nor do we believe that we need to."

BIG 12 NEARING DEAL WITH ESPN, FOX

The latest domino in the sports media rights world has fallen. On Sunday, *Sports Business Journal* revealed the Big 12 conference [agreed to terms](#) with **ESPN** and **Fox Sports** to extend their deal as media partners. The new agreement—worth a reported \$2.28 billion total and \$380 million annually—will kick in once the current one expires after the 2024-25 season and last through 2030-31. That's up from the current deal's worth of \$220 million annually, serving as another benchmark in the ever-rising media rights race. That also means each individual school will see its [payout increase](#) from around \$28 million to nearly \$31.7 million despite the future departures of the University of Texas and University of Oklahoma. All eyes turn to the Pac-12 as the conference is still negotiating with networks and platforms, which [include Amazon](#) and **Apple** as the two continue their ventures into sports.

SINCLAIR, DISNEY EXTEND AGREEMENT TO 2026

Sinclair and **Disney** came to a multi-year agreement that renewed **ABC** affiliations on Sinclair stations to 2026. The deal also includes **Disney Media & Entertainment** renewing affiliations with a trio of ABC affiliates: WHAM in Rochester, New York, and WGTU and WGTQ in Traverse City, Michigan.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM PEACOCK

It's only Halloween, but that's not stopping **Peacock** from getting in the Holiday spirit. It agreed to a deal with **Hallmark Media** to broadcast live and on-demand programs from **Hallmark Channel**, **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** and **Hallmark Drama**. Beginning Wednesday, a dedicated hub will be on the Peacock home page and come with live simulcasts of the three channels. Programs that are currently in season will have episodes on the streamer the next day, and subscribers will also have access to Hallmark's movie library. It's the first time Hallmark's made a linear and SVOD agreement with a streamer.

COMING TO PLUTO

Over 6,300 new and classic episodes from **CBS** franchises will be made available on **Pluto TV** by the end of the year. Over the course of November and December, "Frasier" and "Cheers" will be added to the Sitcom Legends Channel, "Star Trek: The Original Series" and "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" will be on the Star Trek and More Star Trek channels, respectively, and "Have Gun—Will Travel" and "The Wild Wild West" will join the Westerns TV channel. Lastly, "Petticoat Junction" will be added to the Classic TV Comedy channel. Other series arriving on Pluto TV On-Demand include "The Andy Griffith Show," "Criminal Minds," "Gunsmoke," "The Odd Couple" and "The Twilight Zone."

CABLE ONE AMG DEAL NOW IN AUCTION DEFAULT

The **FCC** sent notice Monday that **Cable One** owes an interim default payment with regard to defaults from Auction 105, the 3.5 GHz band auction. Cable One was a winning bidder in auction for 547 Priority Access Licenses (PALs) in the 3550-3650 MHz portion of the 3.5 GHz band. **AMG Technology Group** also was a winning bidder in the same Kansas Licenses Areas as Cable One. That became a problem when Cable One entered into a purchase agreement with AMG for 17.6% ownership interest. Under the rules that govern the 3.5 GHz band, an entity may have an attributable interest in no more than four PALs in a given license area at any given time. Cable One amended its long-form application that removed the four PALs that are at the heart of this, which constitutes defaulting on its winning bids. The FCC said Cable One owes an interim default payment of \$3,239.40, which is 20% of its total net winning bid of \$16,197.00 for these four PALs. A final default payment will be determined once a subsequent winning bid is established for the spectrum.

FIBER FRENZY

Archtop Fiber is bringing its services to residents and businesses in Saugerties, New York. It's the first public partnership announced by the company founded by [cable vet Jeff DeMond](#) and fueled by a more than \$350 million investment from **Post Road Group**. Construction in Saugerties is set to begin in early November and the network will span 250 fiber miles. Archtop has plans to expand in the Hudson Valley as well as markets in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and areas in southeastern U.S.

DOING GOOD

Folks from the **Mediacom** corporate HQ participated in the Making Strides of Hudson Valley walk, helping raise \$27,360 total for the American Cancer Society. The event was held at the Mediacom corporate campus and 262 teams overall took part.

ON THE CIRCUIT

Urban One welcomed advertisers and executives to its "One Night of Black Culture" event in NYC on Thursday. Attendees at the invite-only affair were treated to a panel hosted by iONE SVP, Digital Content *Allison McGevna* featuring actors *Jake and Jazz Smollett*, *D.L. Hughley*, chef *Jernard Wells* and singer *Erica Campbell*, as well as a live mural display, open bar and other performances. Closing the event was 15x Grammy winner and NYC native *Alicia Keys*.