

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Gunning for Gigi: Outcry Over Recent Coverage Grows Louder

When we [spotted](#) last week's *Daily Mail* article tying FCC nominee *Gigi Sohn* to a dominatrix because of her membership on the **Electronic Frontier Foundation** board, we figured the tabloid report would not quietly fade away.

A week later, it's still being talked about. *L.A. Times* columnist *Michael Hiltzik* [devoted](#) more than a thousand words Friday to what he called a "grotesquely ugly" attack with "an undercurrent of homophobia." **NBC News** also jumped on the story Friday, with a piece [headlined](#) "Smear campaign targets nominee who would be FCC's first openly gay commissioner."

For those unaware of the controversy, Sohn's nomination to the FCC's vacant fifth seat hasn't been voted on since Biden first nominated her in October 2021. He renominated her in January. [The Daily Mail](#) and a [Breitbart](#) ran stories last week focused on her board membership of EFF because the organization has honored a dominatrix with one of its awards for promoting online free expression and privacy (it's also bestowed similar honors on Sen. *Ron Wyden* and *Chelsea Manning*). *Communications Daily* [reported](#) that **Fox News** said Wednesday Sohn's nomination had been withdrawn, but a White House rep told the publication that wasn't true.

Helping lead the opposition to this coverage is former **Disney** and **Fox** lobbyist *Preston Padden*, who penned a letter to **Senate Commerce** Chair *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) this week in which he voiced his belief that this is "Tabloid Trash" that he

thinks is coming from the "country's biggest Cable Companies and ISPs." **NCTA** and **Comcast** declined to comment.

Some are also speaking out publicly in support of Sohn. **Consumer Technology Association** Government Affairs SVP *Michael Petricone* described Sohn as a smart, accomplished and qualified nominee in a Tweet. "Please stop this shameful nonsense and confirm her," he wrote. **Incompas**, whose members include **DISH**, **Starry** and **Amazon**, has urged the Senate to fast track Sohn's nomination, describing her as a "fighter and consumer champion" who works with Republicans and Democrats on solutions to connect rural communities.

Cablefax reached out to Padden Friday to see if he's received a response from Cantwell. So far no. *L.A. Times* columnist Hiltzik took issue with Democrats staying mum. "What may be even more appalling. is that, to date, Democrats haven't yet called out the perpetrators of this campaign," he wrote. He's not the only one asking for Democrats to speak up. "When are @SenatorCantwell @SenSchumer @JoeBiden going to stand up and defend their nominee? Why are they leaving her out to dry while these attacks continue?" asked **Fight for the Future** Director *Evan Greer* on Twitter Friday.

There still is no set date for a new hearing on Sohn's nomination. If/when it happens, it will be her third time before the committee as an FCC nominee. While some view the lack of a date as foot dragging, **New Street Research** disagrees. "The uncertainty about the hearing reflects start up issues with the new Senate,

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The screenshot shows the Cablefax website interface. At the top, there are links for LOGIN, SUBSCRIBE, and SEARCH. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for THE DAILY, AWARDS & EVENTS, THE MAGAZINE, SPECIAL REPORTS, THE LISTS, and JOBS. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with a 'The Daily' section for Wednesday-September 15, 2021, and a list of articles including 'Still Assisting: Charter Looks to Aid Community Centers, Job Training'. The main content area features a 'Featured in this Issue' section with a list of companies and a 'SHOW FEATURED' button. A large article titled 'Still Assisting: Charter Looks to Aid Community Centers, Job Training' is prominently displayed.

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not issues with the nomination,” they wrote in a research note. “It tells us that the Committee Democrats have prioritized her nomination and intend to move quickly. But that provides no new information about her chances in the full Senate.”

Much of the pushback against Sohn centers on her support of Title II for net neutrality regulations on broadband providers. There’s also been controversy over her involvement with the shuttered broadcaster bypass app Locast and her support of municipal broadband networks.

YOUTUBE TALKS FUTURE OF SUNDAY TICKET

YouTube parent company **Alphabet** is incredibly excited for the possibilities of **NFL** Sunday Ticket to drive subscriptions and viewership to the platform. During its 4Q22 earnings call late Thursday, the company’s leadership gave a peek into plans to really amp up the features and capabilities of Sunday Ticket and how they believe making it available a la carte adds value both for it and for the NFL. “On **YouTube TV**, we’re building the ability for subscribers to, for example, watch multiple screens at once. And on YouTube CTV, we’ll be adding new features specific to the Sunday Ticket experience like comments, chats, polls and so on,” SVP/Chief Business Officer *Phillipp Schindler* said. “On the creator side, imagine the innovative ways they can create with exclusive NFL content, behind-the-scenes event access and so on, and we’re really excited to see what they’ll do across long-form, shorts, live streams and more.”

WWE HOLDING ON RENEWAL OF U.S. MEDIA RIGHTS

WWE is examining all of its strategic options ahead of the expiration of its domestic media rights in 2024, but whatever

partner the organization chooses to engage with will need to have far more than deep pockets. “A partner that understands the media business, that’s in the media business, that understands how to further monetize the media business, that certainly understands our product, our intellectual property, what we’re doing with it, what can be done with it, media rights both domestically and internationally,” CEO *Nick Khan* said on the company’s 4Q22 earnings call. “We see the international growth opportunity is huge.” WWE will hold back from striking any new media rights deals for properties like “Monday Night Raw” or “SmackDown” until a conclusion is made on the strategic proposals in an effort not to discourage any buyers from coming to the table. “We wanted to go into it with an approach that any of these buyers... people who are looking to own the content that they put on their platforms, that they get an opportunity to potentially make an offer while, of course, we’ll respect all of our contractual language with both of the incumbent partners,” he went on. **USA Network** is the current home for Monday Night Raw and **Fox** has the rights to SmackDown. In 2021, **NBCU** also acquired the exclusive rights to distribute **WWE Network** in the U.S., placing the content on **Peacock**.

LINEUP FOR FCC DIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday’s **FCC** Media Ownership Diversity Symposium should pack a heavy punch. Among those slated to participate on panels is *DuJuan McCoy*, President and CEO of **Circle City Broadcasting**, which is suing **DISH** and **AT&T/DirectTV** claiming racial discrimination. Journalist/entrepreneur *Roland Martin* is set to give closing remarks for the event,

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which runs from 9:30 to 4:45pm ET and will be streamed. The symposium is focused on expanding digital and media ownership opportunities for women and minorities. Also scheduled to speak are **Urban One** CEO *Alfred Liggins*, **BOY-COM Vision** President/CEO and **ACA Connects** Chairman *Patricia Boyers*, **Cable Center** Chief Program Officer *Camilla Formica* and **Chime TV** Founder and CEO *Faith Bautista*.

LUJÁN CHAIRMAN AGAIN

Senate Commerce Chair *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) selected *Ben Ray Luján* (D-NM) to once again serve as chair for the Subcommittee on Communications, Media and Broadband. Luján has introduced legislation that would create limits on the data caps broadband providers can apply to subscribers and has voiced support for **Fuse Media's** petition to have the FCC establish a new, annual report on the diversity of content vendors used by regulatees in broadcast, cable, broadband and satellite.

RATINGS

ESPN's "NFL Live" enjoyed its best monthly viewership since September 2016, averaging 492,000 viewers over the course of January. That's up 12% YOY in the P18-49 demo, helped greatly by the end of the **NFL** regular season and bulk of the playoffs.

HONORS

Charter Communications won the 2023 Human Resource Management Impact Award from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and the Society for Human Resource Management. It is given to an organization with outstanding evidence-based HR management practices, and Charter stood out from the pack with its four-stage virtual job tryout that began during the pandemic. It transformed its hiring process with a Fit Finder to measure occupational interests and work styles; an assessment; the ability for employees to self-schedule interviews; and the embracing of digital interviewing and screenings. Charter will be recognized, along with honorable mention the **U.S. Department of the Interior**, at the 2023 SIOP Annual Conference.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Twitter Hits

Energy and Commerce Committee @HouseCommerce
History made.
Chair @CathyMcMorris Rodgers: The first woman to Chair the Energy and Commerce Committee in its 227-year history.

30.4K views 0:37 / 0:44

Gennefer Gross @Gennefer
An anthology TV series called CLOSURE where each episode wraps up a show that was canceled too soon.
3:55 PM · Feb 1, 2023 · 358.2K Views
1,102 Retweets 160 Quote Tweets 8,598 Likes

Geoffrey Starks @GeoffreyStarks
Black History Month is a time for reflection and celebration. Highlighting our community's history so that we can continue to build a strong foundation for our future is what this month is all about. 1/2

Geoffrey Starks @GeoffreyStarks · Feb 1
Replying to @GeoffreyStarks
As a Commissioner at the @FCC, I will continue to think critically about ways in which we can empower our community this month, and beyond. Happy #BlackHistoryMonth 🇺🇸!

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Research

- (Source: [Medallia](#))
- > 65% of consumers say that negative customer service interactions motivate them to consider switching to a competitor brand.
 - > 73% say they would like to provide feedback about their experience after a customer service interaction, but are more likely to do so with positive experiences.
 - > The ability to communicate with a real person (not a bot), get instant responses and have complaints resolved in real time are the top three factors customers care about when choosing a customer support channel.
 - > 96% of consumers say demonstrating empathy during a customer service interaction is important.

Up Ahead

- FEBRUARY 7:** [Regional Fiber Connect](#); Raleigh, NC
- FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 3:** [ACA Connects Summit](#); DC
- MARCH 13-16:** [Satellite 2023](#); DC
- MARCH 28:** [Free State Foundation's Fifteenth Annual Policy Conference](#); DC

Quotable

"For conservatives who are rightly concerned about traditional government subsidies, I humbly suggest that extending the ACP by appropriating additional funds for the program as well within our economic principles, even when we absolutely must shrink overall federal spending... First, there is bipartisan agreement that access to broadband can be a key tool for citizen self-sufficiency and upward social mobility, and because of this, ensuring every American has access is a national policy priority... Second, broadband adoption reduces governmental costs to function and opens doors for businesses... Lastly, let's recognize that American poverty is not isolated to urban areas but distributed throughout our country in so-called Red areas and Blue ones. The opportunity gap resulting from unequal broadband access impacts all regions." – **Former FCC Commish Michael O’Rielly** in a [column](#) on the need to allocate more funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program before program dollars run out in 2024