

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Moving On: TEGNA Looking Forward After Standard General Deal Fail

TEGNA is finally speaking out after the dissolution of its combination with **Standard General**, and its leadership is as confused as everybody else about the **FCC's** response to the deal.

In the company's first investor and earnings call since November 2021, President/CEO *Dave Lougee* said he didn't have a lot of interaction with the FCC throughout the time that the transaction was pending and Standard General didn't receive the attention it wanted either.

"I think nobody really knows what the FCC was thinking... the fact that it was sent to a hearing designation order really with very little interaction with the parties is a conundrum, and I think for the entire industry, people don't really know what to make of it because of what was a frankly unprecedented process," he said.

He doesn't have a strong view on what this could mean in terms of how the Commission will look at broadcast deals in the future, but he did want to point out that the agreement wouldn't have led to any increased consolidation in the industry. "Because some stations were going to be spun off to another company, TEGNA was actually getting smaller, so it really wasn't consolidation," Lougee said.

But with the deal ultimately failing to come to fruition, it is time for TEGNA leadership to focus on the future. Thankfully, it was able to retain all of its key executives throughout the long

waiting period that came with the merger agreement. "Clearly certainly, at the local level, it made recruiting harder because of the uncertainty of what was going to happen," Lougee said. "But that is standard in any kind of merger agreement when you're a seller, and that's over with now."

They have work to do with 25% of subscribers up for renewal by the end of this year. Like others in the broadcasting space, TEGNA is putting additional focus on striking retrans agreements with vMVPDs. And while the company prefers the economics of traditional linear subs, the money behind virtual subs isn't anything to laugh at.

"We simply believe, as you've heard from others, we should be negotiating those ourselves. We actually think, frankly, the networks would benefit from us doing that as well. So that's a high priority, and that will be an ongoing discussion and one that potentially regulators may take an interest in," Lougee said. "The virtual is growing, which certainly off the shelf helps offset the loss of traditional subs, but I think there's more to be written on that as to how those deals get negotiated in the years to come."

Despite the challenges of the last few years, TEGNA isn't closing itself off to the possibility of another combination in the future. But until the right opportunity presents itself, it is keeping its head down and keeping its eye on what is best for the company as a standalone entity. Leadership will be spending the next couple of weeks talking with the board and shareholders to gather input in terms of business needs.

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“We have an obligation to absolutely focus on our stand-alone efforts unless there ever becomes an opportunity that the board determines is in its interest to do, like it chose to do a year and a half ago,” Lougee said. “Our laser focus is on running this as a standalone company, which is what we should be doing as management to produce the best results.”

TEGNA will have more to share on its investment plans and strategic outlook in August at its 2Q23 earnings call.

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## DIRECTV WINS COMMERCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SUNDAY TICKET

**DirecTV** will still have a hand in the distribution of **NFL's** Sunday Ticket. It has struck a multi-year partnership with **EverPass Media**, the JV between the NFL and **Redbird Capital**, that designates DirecTV for Business as a provider of the football package for commercial locations nationwide. DirecTV for Business currently boasts a network of more than 300,000 commercial venues including casinos, restaurants, bars and hotel lounges. The agreement is set to begin with the upcoming 2023 season.

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## NARB FLAGS T-MOBILE

A **National Advertising Review Board** panel recommended modifications to certain claims **T-Mobile** made regarding its Home Internet service in advertisements. **Comcast** initially flagged the advertising, which resulted in the **National Advertising Division** recommending T-Mobile discontinue or modify its “fast” and “high-speed” claims and discontinue the “reliable” claim for T-Mobile Home Internet. NARB’s panel concluded T-Mobile’s “fast” and “high-speed” claims are supported because T-Mobile uses the data to meet **FCC**-required product disclosures. However, the panel added those claims could lead consumers to believe the speed performance is similar to the speeds found in wired broadband service. The panel recommended T-Mobile modifies its “fast,” “high-speed” and “reliable” home internet claims to clearly disclose that the company provides access through a mobile wireless or cellular network and that speeds may vary because of that. It also recommended T-Mobile adjust the speed range to include percentiles of home internet customers to which any speed ranges apply.

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## CARRIAGE

**Cineverse's** FAST channel **Crime Hunters** is joining the **Sling Freestream** lineup thanks to a new agreement. **Crime Hunters** launched in April 2022 and features programs like “The New

Detectives,” “The FBI Files” and “Interview with a Murderer.” It joins other Cineverse channels already on Sling Freestream including **Midnight Pulp**, **AsianCrush** and **Docurama**. – **Roku** added **ViX's** premium tier to its lineup of subscriptions. The streaming service owned by **TelevisaUnivision** will be available to Roku users for \$6.99/month or \$59.99/year after a seven-day trial. ViX comes with more than 7,000 hours of live sports from Liga MX, CONCACAF Champions League and other top soccer divisions, as well as series and movies like “María Felix, La Doña” and “La Mujer del Diablo.”

## Cablefax Executive Round Up

We asked the **Cablefax 100** how they personally give back to their communities.



**Elizabeth Casey**

EVP & Deputy General Counsel

**Fox Corp.**

General Counsel

**Fox Sports**

“I serve as a trustee for Mount Saint Mary’s University, which educates many underserved, first generation, Pell

Grant eligible women in Los Angeles. Additionally, I am involved in the Equestrian Order, which supports abandoned children and other needy people primarily in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan. For seven years, my family and I ran a program that served approximately 50,000 meals to the homeless in the Los Angeles area.”



**Brett Dismuke**

GM, ALLBLK & WE tv

**AMC Networks**

“I am an active member of my fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi. We mentor young men, 12-18, to prepare them for adulthood. We home in on financial literacy, college prep, etiquette, testing strategies, life skills through our

Kappa League program.”



**Andrea Greenberg**

President & CEO

**MSG Networks**

“In part, as a board member of The Garden of Dreams Foundation, which brings life-changing opportunities to young people in need in the New York tri-state area. I’m particularly proud of our decade-long ‘MSG

Classroom’ program, which allows our employees to mentor high school students every semester.”



**Scott Mills**

President & CEO

**BET Media Group**

“I’m proud to support many community organizations because the needs in the world are so great. I believe the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) plays a unique and critical role in ensuring that the Black community fully utilizes one of the most foundational structures in this country, the law, to address vital issues.”

## AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC** released information about additional outreach grant opportunities for partners to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program. It has issued two Notices of Funding Opportunities for up to \$10 million. Approximately \$5 million of that will be targeted for the National Competitive Outreach Program while the other half will go to the Tribal Competitive Outreach Program, and both grant programs look to enlist trusted community messengers to develop outreach strategies to reach historically unserved and underserved communities. Eligible NCOP applicants must submit applications by 6pm ET on June 30 while TCOP applicants have until 6pm ET on July 28. “We’ve had great success so far—with more than 18 million households enrolled—but we know there are many more households we can reach with help to get online and stay online,” FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* said in a statement. “No strategy has proven more effective than empowering trusted leadership and organizations to work with families and raise awareness about the Affordable Connectivity Program.” – The FCC is re-chartering the Communications Equity and Diversity Council for another two-year term. The council is focused on crafting recommendations on how underserved communities have access to opportunities made possible by next-generation networks without discrimination. *Jamila Bess Johnson* will continue as the Designated Federal Officer for the council.

## TAKE ME DOWN TO ROKU CITY

**Paramount+** is launching its own **Roku** City Neighborhood, making it the first entertainment brand to launch a custom neighborhood on the platform. It’ll feature brand-specific buildings, visuals and destinations featuring franchises like “Transformers,” “Star Trek,” the UEFA Champions League and more. The neighborhood will be available from today through Monday.

## VERIZON UPGRADES NETWORK IN ILLINOIS NEIGHBORHOODS

**Verizon** turned on its 5G Ultra Wideband network in a number of Illinois communities Thursday. Residents of Peoria, Champaign, Bloomington, Decatur, Springfield, Salem, Brighton, Sterling, Rock Falls, Kinmundy and Greenville will now have higher speeds and greater capacity thanks to the provider’s newly-launched C-band spectrum. Even more bandwidth will be available on the network by the end of the year.

## NBA RATINGS

This year’s **NBA** Playoffs have been a ratings success for **ESPN**. The postseason has averaged 5.58 million viewers across ESPN platforms, making it the most-watched playoffs

in 11 years, according to Nielsen. That’s a 9% improvement compared to last year. Monday night’s Nuggets-Lakers game that saw Denver advance to the NBA Finals helped with ESPN’s milestone by averaging 8.21 million viewers, peaking at 11.48 million in the 11-11:15pm window. It also was the most-watched NBA conference finals Game 4 on ESPN platforms since 2015.

## FIBER FRENZY

**Comcast** is bringing its Xfinity 10G network to more than 10,000 homes and businesses in Arcadia, Florida, and surrounding areas in DeSoto County. Network expansion is expected to be completed by the end of summer.

## PROGRAMMING

**Max** is celebrating the 25th anniversary of “Sex and the City” with a four-day celebration ahead of the June premiere of Season 2 of “And Just Like That...” It’ll run from June 8-11 in New York City and give fans the chance to relive iconic moments from the show. Admission is free on a first-come, first-serve basis. – Many mourned the passing of *Tina Turner* on Wednesday, and **Bounce TV** is paying tribute with a special presentation of “Tina Turner: Simply the Best” on Saturday at 9pm. The program will also be available on Bounce’s SVOD **Brown Sugar**, and its FAST channel **Bounce XL** will air the special Sunday at 7pm. – The third and final season of “How To with John Wilson” will begin July 28 at 11pm on **HBO**, available to stream on **Max**. Episodes will release on subsequent Fridays for a total of six episodes. – If you’re not at the pool this Memorial Day Weekend, **Fox News** will have programming to celebrate the holiday. FNC’s morning show “Fox & Friends” will broadcast in front of a live audience from the Fox Square in New York City. “Fox & Friends Weekend” will take over with tributes to veterans, including a performance from the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy Ceremonial marching bands throughout the program. On Sunday, FNC will have “The Unauthorized History of the Korean War” at 8pm. Chief political anchor *Bret Baier* will host and detail the history of the war and how it impacted the Cold War.

## PEOPLE

A pair of **AMC Networks** leaders are departing to join **Netflix**. *Emma Miller* already joined the SVOD as Director, Overall Deals and Series for the U.S. and Canada, and *Carrie Gillogly* will be the new Director, Drama Series for the U.S. and Canada. The two became co-heads of AMCN’s scripted programming in 2020, working on programs like “Fear the Walking Dead” and “Hell on Wheels for Miller.” Miller will report to VP, Overall Deals, Original Series *Nne Ebong* and Gillogly will report to VP, Original Series, Drama *Jinny Howe*.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## ID Has Quite a Curious Case with Natalia Grace

To welcome someone into a family is a surreal and emotional moment. For the Barnetts, life was great in the summer of 2010. They had just moved into a new house in Westfield, Indiana, and were preparing to adopt a child from Ukraine, Natalia. But joy turned into suspicion and led to what became "The Curious Case of Natalia Grace," premiering in a three-night event on **Investigation Discovery** from Monday-Wednesday at 9pm. Natalia was six years old at the time of her adoption. She had spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia, a rare genetic disorder that leads to short stature and skeletal abnormalities. Her age came into question when her adoptive parents alleged Natalia had menstrual cycles and showed other signs that her age might not line up with what they were told. It was a charged time for the Barnetts, and that is apparent with the on-camera interviews with the father, Michael, and his oldest son, Jacob. "As the story played out in real-time, the participants experienced very authentic tension navigating real-life events as they unfolded," *Jason Sarlanis*, President, **Turner Networks**, ID and **HLN**, told **CFX**. "Our production team prioritized an honest and accurate portrayal of their journeys while being very mindful to create a safe space for them to share their stories." Suspicion turned into fear after Natalia threatened her fellow siblings and parents. It prompted the Barnetts to petition for her age to be legally changed to 22 in 2012, and a year later the family moved to Canada and placed Natalia in her own apartment. The parents were charged with eight total crimes—most involving neglect of a dependent—which added legal hurdles for the production crew. "With trials pending for both, it was a waiting game for the gag orders to expire, and once that happened it was all hands on deck," Sarlanis said. "Navigating those relationships and the legal parameters was a constant hurdle, but by doing so diligently, 'The Curious Case of Natalia Grace' is the first documentary offering this type of access to this unforgettable story." All charges against the Barnetts were dropped as of March. — *Noah Ziegler*

### REVIEWS

"The Great," streaming on **Hulu**. There's so much happening in this terrific period series that a brief review, or a long one, can barely touch on its qualities. First, showrunner *Tony McNamara* tells viewers this is historical fiction, an "occasionally true story," as the opening credits say. That gives McNamara artistic freedom to critique leadership, particularly the divine right variety. Similarities between current leaders and some of the bullying, stupidity, indiscretions and peccadillos (you'll see) of Emperor Peter III of Russia (an excellent *Nicholas Hoult*) are so obvious McNamara barely comments about them. Instead, he lets viewers draw comparisons, which makes the series much more relatable. Moreover, the series also let viewers witness something rarely covered: the slow pace of reform, as it slogs against an entrenched system. Yet, "The Great" refers to Catherine the Great (1729-1796), who ruled Russia for 34 years. *Elle Fanning* is a delight as Catherine. And the series' 6 eps—too long for some, a quibble—let viewers see Catherine's arc, beginning as a young, political outsider and evolving into a more mature and progressive ruler. Surrounding Fanning and Hoult is a top-notch ensemble, including *Phoebe Fox* as Catherine's lady and appropriately named *Adam Godley* as the archbishop. You might recall Godley in another tale of abusive leadership, **HBO's** "Succession," which ends its successful run Sunday. — *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(05/15/23-05/21/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.901</b>	<b>2812</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.820</b>	<b>2559</b>
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.448</b>	<b>1399</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.350</b>	<b>1092</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.247</b>	<b>772</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.226</b>	<b>705</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.199</b>	<b>621</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.192</b>	<b>599</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.190</b>	<b>593</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.179</b>	<b>559</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.177</b>	<b>554</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.173</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.148</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.140</b>	<b>436</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.137</b>	<b>428</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.134</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>HMN</b>	<b>0.132</b>	<b>411</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.119</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>FS1</b>	<b>0.115</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.110</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.106</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.104</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.099</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>NWSMX</b>	<b>0.096</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.079</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>COM</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.076</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.073</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>PRMNT</b>	<b>0.067</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>FXX</b>	<b>0.066</b>	<b>208</b>

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



## CONGRATULATIONS to all the honorees!

The 2023 Cablefax 100 Magazine is FINALLY here.

Browse, share, and get to know this year's top executives list in our annual 100 digital issue.

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