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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Back-Up Plan: What Happens When ACP Funding Runs Out?

Plenty of folks on Capitol Hill are rooting for more funding to be set aside for the Affordable Connectivity Program, but what will happen if the pot of money is allowed to empty?

At a **Brookings** event, *Traci Morris*, the Director of the American Indian Policy Institute at **Arizona State University**, described the potential outcome as a logistical nightmare with providers having to disenroll the 18.5 million households that were participating in the program as of Monday.

Beyond that, pulling internet service from those in need would erode all the trust that community organizations and other **FCC** partners have built by spreading the word about the subsidy and convincing people why they need to sign up for internet access.

"I think before it goes away, there has to be a plan to keep things level set. I think we can all recognize that. We're doing all this work to bring down a scarecrow of 'I'm afraid of the internet.' Now we're going to take it away and we're going to start building a bigger and badder one, right?" *Mike Culp*, the Director of the **Albemarle County Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office**, said. "That would be a real mistake."

Culp added that the closure of the program is also scary for ISPs, and he believes the biggest hurt will be felt by the small- and medium-sized providers. "Competition is going to be really important for reliability, especially in the rural areas.

If you only have one provider in a specific area, when they're down, they're down and they're going to hold you to whatever they want to bring the service back up," he said. "I think there's going to be a lack of competition and the rural areas will suffer the most."

Morris also said that the suspension of ACP support could cause significant disruption in Tribal communities, but those groups have also become resilient over time.

"We've still got other programs we can plug into like **USDA's** RUS and things like that where we can plug in and patch. We're used to patching... or they'll find a way to offset it in other ways," she said. "I don't think tribes will stop building because we've never had this kind of investment for the building of infrastructure... I think it's just going to rearrange and change the way things are done."

NTIA is also distributing funding through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, a \$3 billion program directed to Tribal governments to be used for broadband deployment, distance learning, telehealth, affordability and digital inclusion.

There are still plenty of opportunities for Congress to appropriate more funding for ACP, and there seems to be support on both sides of the aisle for a discussion on how to move forward. There's still a long way to go before any solution is reached though, and even the best of outcomes isn't likely to include a funding package that is anything like the initial \$14 billion that was included in the IJJA.

"For those that are expecting the same type of support

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or the same type of funding level that we've had since the program was initiated with IJJA, I think that might be a little aggressive," former FCC Commissioner *Michael O'Rielly* said. "There's a different Congress, a different makeup, there's different policymakers in charge and you have to figure out how to deal with certain things."

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NEW CEO FOR CHIMETV

English-language Asian American Pacific Islander network **ChimeTV** is now part of **Society 1**, a privately funded members club founded by *Takashi Cheng*. Former **Court TV** and **CBS Sports** exec *Bob Rose* remains president. Cheng takes over as CEO following founder *Faith Bautista's* departure. Last month, the **National Asian American Coalition** sued Bautista, who founded the HUD-approved housing counseling agency in 2004. She has denied the claims, which include allegations she caused the organization to submit approximately 15,672 counseling sessions to the State of California's National Mortgage Settlement program, resulting in payments to NAAC totaling more than \$12.3 million. "To date, NAAC only has been able to verify a small percentage of these sessions as valid and properly documented. While the full extent of defendants' fraud is currently unquantified, NAAC expects the damages to be substantial," NAAC said in its lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court. The suit also claims Bautista and her lawyers drew up legal documents for NAAC to "purchase a 20% interest in Faith7 and Chime TV for \$2.5 million, which placed the valuation of this fledgling network at \$12.5 million." The complaint goes on to allege Bautista requested that the bank fund a loan to NAAC of \$2.5 million, the purpose of which was to fund the fledgling network, adding that the board demanded Bautista return the money to the bank but not before it was forced to pay \$4,499 in interest. The Board has since completely disassociated NAAC from ChimeTV. ChimeTV launched in January with **Charter** as its sole MVPD carriage deal. At launch, Bautista was a member of Charter's External Diversity and Inclusion Council, a group of national civic and business leaders who help the company implement its DEI strategy. However, she is no longer listed on Charter's website. According to Charter, she's on a leave of absence. Her public affairs program is no longer appearing on **Spectrum News**. In a statement, Bautista denied all allegations made against her in the NAAC suit. "She is deeply committed to serving the Asian American, Hispanic, African American as well as low and moderate-income individuals and has dedicated her career to advocating for their rights and needs," says her attorney *Sean Macias* of Macias Counsel. As for

ChimeTV, new CEO Cheng was an executive producer for *Ken Jeong's* new film "The Great Divide," which explores anti-Asian racism in the wake of COVID-19. Last year, Society 1 announced a strategic investment in **Character Media**, which has produced the longest standing API awards show "Unforgettable Gala." It's also played a role in API-centric streaming platform **GoldenTV**.

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DISH OFF OF S&P 500

DISH will no longer be on the **Standard & Poor's** 500 index in two weeks' time. The operator will be replaced by **Palo Alto Networks** on the S&P 500 effective June 20, and DISH will move to the S&P SmallCap 600. S&P said the changes ensure each index is more representative of its market capitalization range. The S&P 600 is comprised of companies that have a total market capitalization within the range of \$750 million to \$4.6 billion. In the past six months, DISH's stock has fallen over 50% as it manages declining TV customers, falling revenue and cyberattack ramifications.

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APOLLO'S AT&T INVESTMENT

Apollo will invest \$2 billion in AT&T subsidiary **AT&T Mobility**, which will use the proceeds to partially replace the \$8 billion of preferred interests that were outstanding prior to 4Q22. The investment is expected to be completed in June.

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CHARTER PICKS NOKIA FOR SPECTRUM MOBILE 5G

Charter has its solution to offload MVNO traffic from its leased mobile network. The company tapped **Nokia** to support targeted 5G design and deployment for Spectrum Mobile customers. Charter will utilize Nokia's AirScale equipment portfolio—including its 5G RAN products—to increase network capacity and deliver faster speeds. Within that 5G RAN portfolio, Charter will use strand-mounted radios for CBRS, baseband units and a new 5G CBRS Strand Mount Small Cells All-in-One portfolio on the company's assets. The rollout will start in select trial markets in the U.S. It's Nokia's first deal with an MSO for large-scale wireless 5G deployment.

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WWE INKS TWITCH DEAL

WWE signed a multi-year partnership with **Twitch** that'll see the return of the official WWE channel as well as the WWE

Superstar channels. The deal entails the introduction of an alternate sidecast to “Monday Night RAW,” which will feature a rotating panel of hosts and guest appearances from WWE figures. WWE will also have alternate live feeds for all premium press conferences on its Twitch channel.

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NO MORE PEACOCK WITH XFINITY

As **Comcast** preps for the launch of its streaming offering Now TV, the company said it will no longer include a free Peacock Premium subscription with Xfinity services starting June 26. Instead, it'll begin offering customers a free sample of **Peacock** programming. Now TV is expected to launch soon and will come with the ad-supported Peacock Premium tier along with over 60 channels for \$20/month.

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RATINGS

Game 1 of the **NBA** Finals between the Nuggets and Heat averaged 11.58 million viewers across the primary **ABC** broadcast and alternate telecast on **ESPN2**. ABC accounted for 11.04 million average viewers while “NBA in Stephen A’s World” added 544,000. The two combined to peak at 12.78 million viewers from 10:30-10:45pm. – ID docuseries “The Curious Case of Natalia Grace” averaged a 0.92 L+3 rating among 25-54s, a 179% increase vs. the prior six weeks. The three nights of premiere episodes notched 6.3 million total viewers on ID since Ep 1 debuted on May 29. The finale was the net’s highest telecast in three years among 25-54s, with a .99. The series examines *Michael* and *Kristine Barnett*, who allege that *Natalia* was an adult masquerading as a six-year-old when they adopted her. Natalia maintains she was an exploited child.

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FIBER FRENZY

DZS and **Irby Utilities** had two rural electric cooperative broadband customers eclipse subscriber milestones. **Connect2First**, which is based in central and southeastern Arkansas, and central Mississippi’s **FASTnet** have deployed broadband to more than 12,000 subscribers to date. That’s over double their respective homes passed over the last year. With the help of Irby’s broadband network planning, DZS’s technology solutions and over \$53 million in government programs, the two providers plan to bring service to more than 140,000 homes and businesses between their two service areas.

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COMCAST, COX MAKE THE CUT IN DIVERSITYINC’S TOP 50

Comcast NBCUniversal ranked 13th on **DiversityInc’s** annual [rankings](#) of Top 50 Companies for Diversity, while **Cox Communications** took the #18 spot. First place went to **Mas-**

tercard, followed by **Medtronic** and **The Hershey Company**. One hundred and fifty-seven employers, with roughly 8.3 million U.S. employees, submitted leadership accountability, human capital diversity metrics, talent programs, workplace practices, supplier diversity and philanthropy data.

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PROGRAMMING

It’s **STARZ’s** turn for Xfinity’s “Free This Week” program. Now through Sunday, viewers can watch all six seasons of “Outlander” as the show gears up for its Season 7 premiere on June 16. – Fixers rejoice. **HGTV** ordered “Fixer to Fabulous” for a 16-episode fifth season, and the network also greenlit a spin-off series “Fixer to Fabulous: Italiano,” which will debut in 2024. – A new animated series is coming to **Adult Swim** and **Max**. “My Adventures with Superman” will begin July 6 at midnight for linear and be available to stream the next day. – The third leg of the Triple Crown will be on **FOX Sports** for the first time ever. The network will have the 155th Belmont Stakes this Saturday, with coverage beginning at 4pm on **FOX** with “Belmont Day on FOX.” An alternate telecast “America’s Day at the Belmont” will also begin at 4pm Saturday on **FS1**. It’ll be tailored more for the dedicated horse racing fanatics and dive into handicapping and other race-related notes. Main coverage will begin at 6:30pm on FOX, with post time set for 7:05pm. – **Paramount+** acquired “Love in Taipei,” a film based on the best-selling novel “Loveboat, Taipei.” It’ll premiere this summer exclusively in the U.S. and Canada (exact date still to be determined) before it becomes available in other global markets.

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PEOPLE

NBCUniversal’s *Joe Benarroch* is following the company’s former ad chief *Linda Yaccarino* to **Twitter**, taking a role “focusing on business operations.” It wasn’t immediately clear what title he holds. Benarroch served as EVP, Communications for NBCU Global Advertising and Partnerships. “I am looking forward to bringing my experience to Twitter, and to working with the entire team to build Twitter 2.0 together,” he wrote in a note to reporters over the weekend. – *Angela Molloy* was promoted to SVP, Development & Original Production, Unscripted for **ALLBLK/WE tv**, reporting to *Brett Dismuke*, head of content for ALLBLK and WE tv. It’s part of parent **AMC Networks** plan to formalize one programming group for ALLBLK and WE tv. Molloy was previously VP, Development for WE tv. The realignment also sees *Noella Charles* join as VP, Development & Original Production, Unscripted and *Lisa Marie Angelo* promoted Associate Producer to Director, Development & Original Production, Unscripted. *Nikki Love* continues in her role as SVP, Development & Original Production, Scripted, ALLBLK/WE tv. *Ashley McFarlin* and *Kate Farrell* join her team, shifting from unscripted roles primarily focused on WE tv to scripted development and production focused on both ALLBLK and WE tv.