

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Streaming Spats: FCC Nomination Hearing Focuses on vMVPD Challenges

Thursday's **FCC** nomination hearing before **Senate Commerce** was drama-free compared to the fireworks of those held in 2022 for *Gigi Sohn* with no mention of tweets criticizing **Fox News** or defunct broadcast streaming services.

On hand to testify were Commissioners *Brendan Carr* and *Geoffrey Starks*, up for re-nomination, as well as *Anna Gomez*, up for consideration for the fifth FCC seat, and *Fara Damelin*, the first presidentially-nominated person for the position of FCC Inspector General. Many of the questions for Damelin were left for the written record with committee members far more focused on issues to be put in front of commissioners in the near future.

The usual suspects like net neutrality and USF reform were among the larger lines of questioning, but also receiving more attention than usual was the need for the Commission to take a fresh look at the vMVPD marketplace. Commerce Chair *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) would like FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* to refresh the agency's 2014 proceeding on vMVPDs and the growing presence streaming has in the marketplace while linear video declines. Cantwell believes the issue is even more pressing today to ensure that local broadcasters are receiving fair value for the content they're providing across video platforms.

"There's no easy fix here from the 1984 Cable Act or the 1992 Cable Act. They don't in particular envision streaming.

But asking questions and trying to figure out if we can help in this dynamic media space I think makes good sense," Starks said. Carr concurred, and Gomez expressed her interest in delving into the causation of the issue and what the Commission can do under current law if confirmed.

The subject was also raised in a Wednesday WSJ [op-ed](#) from former FCC Commissioner *Robert McDowell*. He said a loophole allowing networks to take control of local stations' distribution rights, take fees for others' content and leave stations with a much smaller cut of the money than if they had negotiated their own deals.

NAB President/CEO *Curtis LeGeyt* applauded the discussion on the topic, expressing his gratitude for Cantwell for her efforts to preserve local journalism amid the shifting media landscape. "As every consumer recognizes, streaming platforms have drastically changed their ability to access local broadcast content," he said in a statement. "We echo Chair Cantwell's call for the FCC to update its vMVPD proceeding to examine this issue, and look forward to working closely with the Commission and lawmakers to inform their deliberations."

Gomez was asked to give commitments on a number of fronts, including to oppose rate regulation and work together with her colleagues at **NTIA** to identify spectrum on the commercial and federal side to study for possible sharing and repurposing. She was also pushed to give her thoughts on the Commission's treatment of the **TEGNA-Standard General** merger with Ranking Member *Ted Cruz* (R-TX) asking her to

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commit to not “sit quietly by” and allow a matter of similar significance to be decided at the bureau level.

“Commissioners are nominated by the President. They’re confirmed by the Senate. I think that they should vote on more items than not, especially when they are major items in the public interest,” she said. “I would commit that I would work with the Chairwoman on whatever she puts before us, but I do believe that commissioners should vote on matters of significant public interest.”

O’RIELLY CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ON ACP SHORT-TERM RENEWAL

Former **FCC** commissioner *Mike O’Rielly* thinks there’s a path forward for re-funding the Affordable Connectivity Program on a temporary basis. “I’ve been kind of describing it as solving the Band-Aid issue, which is the short-term funding issue. Many people want to talk about the bigger reform of USF and contributions... [that’s] is always a longer term debate,” he said during appearance at a **Media Institute** luncheon in Washington Thursday. His prognostication is that what’s ahead will probably be a smaller universe of funding than many would like and it will include a deeper dive into eligibility and waste, fraud and abuse. “I think you can turn those dials without harming the program, without undermining its purpose, while still providing all the benefits it brings forward. I think that there’s a deal to be had in the short term,” he said. The Republican used his speech before media executives to advocate for the FCC to “free the overburdened broadcast and cable industry” from outdated regulations. He cited examples such as the UHF discount, the newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership ban and the 39% national ownership cap for broadcasters. “The Commission still regulates broadcast and cable providers as if there was no internet,” he said. O’Rielly spoke as **Senate Commerce** held a hearing on the other side of town on the nomination of *Anna Gomez* to the FCC. If she’s approved and Commissioners *Brendan Carr* and *Geoffrey Starks* are reconfirmed, Dems will hold a 3-2 majority on the Commission for the first time since *Biden* took office. As such, O’Rielly told the crowd to prepare for the return of net neutrality debates. He thinks there’s room for Congress to do something in the space, but the motivation to do so may hinge more on where the FCC lands. “Certainly, if the Commission were to get into the thorny issue of rate regulation, I think that will that will provide some energy to the Hill that would be very helpful to the overall cause, but negative if the Commission were to go down that route.”

TELECOM M&A VALUE DOWN FROM APRIL, UP YOY

Despite a significant drop in telecom M&A value compared to April, May saw more value in transactions with less than half the amount of deals done compared to the same period last year. According to **S&P Global** Market Intelligence, U.S. and Canadian media and telecom companies participated in 96 M&A deals for a total value of \$1.99 billion. While down compared to April—which had 99 transactions for \$17.59 billion—it had better value than May 2022’s mark of \$1.45 billion from 183 deals. The biggest deal came from **Luminar Technologies’** purchase of an 82% stake in **Forbes Global Media Holdings**. **Endeavor’s** \$9.78 billion acquisition of **WWE** remains the biggest deal this year.

WBD KEEPS AD TRAIN ROLLING

After adding Unified ID 2.0 to premium brands across digital platforms Wednesday, **Warner Bros. Discovery** is rolling out a six-second pre-roll ad product for partners across WBD Sports digital properties. It’s a consumer-focused product that soft launched in 1Q23 and has since been used for ads tied to high-profile games, moments as well as highlights, live videos,

Cablefax Executive Round Up

What are the joys and hurdles of expanding on a popular franchise?



Dan McDermott
President, Entertainment and AMC Studios
AMC Networks

“It’s important to give existing fans some of the things they love and also some things they haven’t seen before. That’s one of the reasons we’ve set our new series in ‘The Walking Dead’ Universe in such interesting and novel locations—like Manhattan and Paris. At the same time, it’s critical that extensions of successful franchises also bring new viewers along for the ride. You need to expand the aperture of your invitation and serve both audiences.”



Loren Ruch
Head of Content
HGTV

“At HGTV, we often expand our most successful franchises in unique and inspiring ways. The joys come from finding ways to enhance a series by adding elements that our audiences love. For example, the success of our core show ‘Home Town’ made it a no-brainer to expand to a larger tentpole with ‘Home Town Takeover,’ which rated wonderfully for us! The hurdles come from not wanting to fall into tropes of playing it too safe when you expand a franchise, or viewers may not even notice that you’re presenting them with something new. Years ago, we brought back one of our signature series from years earlier, and viewers didn’t even know it was a new version.”

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polls and more. For tonight's **NBA Draft**, House of Highlights' live show "Through the Wire" will have a six-second product in partnership with Verizon's Straight Talk wireless.

portal to require user interaction before they are granted WiFi access and OpenRoaming, a service enabling an automatic and secure WiFi experience around the globe.

COX ENTERPRISES LAUNCHES NEW VENTURE

Cox Enterprises created a new fund dedicated to making venture investments in emerging growth businesses. Called **Socium Ventures**, it'll help with each stage of its portfolio companies' development while establishing relationships with their respective founders and partners. Socium will use Cox's infrastructure to provide permanent capital from a single limited partner with no specific liquidity timeline, direct access to leaders with experience building markets and an investment team that can offer insight on public and private investing. The fund is seeking investment opportunities from \$3 million-\$25 million for Series A funding and beyond.

TOUCHSTONE PARTNERS REVEALED

The **WICT Network** unveiled this year's Touchstone Partners, which recognizes a group of organizations that demonstrate a commitment to equity and inclusion through the Network's development programs and initiatives. The 2023 honorees include **Charter**, **Comcast NBCUniversal** and **Walt Disney**. The Catalyst Touchstone Partners, which highlights companies that lead the way for creating women leaders, included **Accenture**, **Altice USA**, **Cisco**, **CommScope**, **Cox** and **Warner Bros. Discovery**.

SPECTRUM HAPPENINGS

Charter introduced a new **Spectrum Business** initiative to help those interested in creating their own business venture. It's called "Let's Get Started" and it has a digital hub with free resources, how-to articles and guidance on how to start a successful small business. Participants can also request a free mentor from the business advisory firm SCORE, which has mentors available via 225 chapters across the U.S. for in-person or virtual coaching. – Spectrum is teaming up with comedians *Tony Baker* and *Kevin Fredericks* to promote its wireless connectivity package Spectrum One in a [music video](#) dubbed "The One." The duo was previously featured in the promotion for the launch of Spectrum One, which earned an honorable mention in the [2023 Faxies](#) for Audience Engagement & Experience for New Product or Launch.

ON THE CIRCUIT

Registration is now [open](#) for the **SCTE Cable-Tec Expo 2023**, which celebrates its 40th edition October 16-19 in Denver. The show already has 36% more exhibitors signed compared to this time last year, of which 43 are newcomers. Over 330 papers were submitted for the Fall Technical Forum, and 105 were selected to be presented in 35 sessions organized into five tracks: Wireline Networks: 10G and Beyond; Operational and Network Transformation; Security, Privacy and AI; Construction and Workforce and Residential Networks, Wireless, Mobility and IoT. The forum will also include the inaugural Innovation Policy Track, diving into the government's perspectives on broadband funding. – **NBC News** anchor *Lester Holt* will headline **NAMIC's** 37th Annual Conference in New York City. The event will take place September 19-20 and is themed "Our Legacy, A Mosaic of Possibilities" to promote shared industry responsibility for diversity, equity, access and inclusion. Registration is available [here](#).

YOUTUBE TV BRINGS EVEN MORE MULTIVIEW

YouTube TV is continuing to roll out [multiview](#) enhancements for customers. The vMVPD began testing up to five new multiview streams that can be watched 24/7 across news, sports, business news, weather and deportes. They can be found in the home tab and will be initially available to a small portion of members before gradually launching throughout the summer.

PEOPLE

Managed WiFi solutions provider **Airties** selected founder/CTO *Metin Taskin* and *Guillaume van Gaver* to serve as co-CEOs. Taskin helped create the company in 2004 and has been CTO since then, while van Gaver joins with over 25 years of international experience in the telecommunications industry. Van Gaver was most recently Group CEO of the communications platform **LINK Mobility Group**. – Former **Disney** CCO *Zenia Mucha* is headed to **TikTok** to become its Chief Brand and Communications Officer. It's a newly formed role that'll guide the vision of TikTok's brand. Mucha spent 20 years at Disney, starting as SVP, Communications for **ABC Television Group** in 2001.

CABLELABS LEADS OPENWIFI TRIUMPH

CableLabs and **Telecom Infra Project OpenWiFi** have come together to chart a new step forward for community-developed open source platform OpenWiFi. The pair have commissioned a refreshed OpenWiFi Community Lab to serve as the testing ground and demonstration stage for global cable operators. They've also validated version 2.9 of OpenWiFi. It supports a

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not publish tomorrow, June 23. Your next issue will hit your inbox on Monday. In the meantime, keep an eye on Cablefax.com for coverage of breaking news.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Reelz Tames the World's Most Dangerous Band

There are few rock bands that saw the meteoric rise that Guns N' Roses did in the late 1980s. Whether it was the mystique of *Axl Rose* or the exhilaration of hearing the opening to "Welcome to the Jungle," it was a band that produced millions of sold albums while being the essence of a defiant spirit. **Reelz** took a deep look at the band's ascent to fame, controversies and cultural impact in "Guns N' Roses: America's Most Dangerous Band" which premiered Sunday. While it begins highlighting the musical achievements Guns N' Roses accomplished, darker aspects of the group fueled its reputation as a dangerous and rebellious band. To show that, however, was challenging, so the crew had to get creative in order to fully differentiate the documentary from previous ones. "The [Guns N' Roses] camp is pretty tight. They do not do interviews at all," director/showrunner *Randy Martin* told **CFX**. "So leaning into the whole danger aspect—there were incidents at several GNR shows, and we find some of the people that were literally part of these incidents and talk to them." Of those incidents was in 1991 when Rose spotted someone with a camera (highly frowned upon at the time) and jumped into the crowd to take matters into his own hands. Martin and the crew went straight to the source and interviewed the fan in question, who reflected on the incident and how quickly it divulged into chaos. It's a good microcosm of what Guns N' Roses' public perception was: a band that captivated many but could spiral at a moment's notice. In Martin's eyes, however, the group stayed true to who they were no matter the damage. "At the end of the day, these guys were real. Even if they made the wrong decisions back then ... were they the right decisions at the time? No, but they stuck to their guns and they wouldn't compromise because a label would want them to do one thing," Martin said. – *Noah Ziegler*

REVIEWS

"FX's *The Bear*," Season 2, streaming on **Hulu**. When a series that's not supposed to become a hit does, sometimes it drifts into mediocrity in subsequent seasons for various reasons. This happens with restaurants, too. As such, we hoped "The Bear" would remain slightly under the radar, allowing showrunner *Christopher Storer* room for calculated risks with this series about a ragtag bunch who run a beef sandwich joint in Chicago. Good news from the kitchen is Storer hasn't altered the recipes much. Back for Season 2 is *Jeremy Allan White*, playing the same hardscrabble but brilliant character he owned on "Shameless." Here he's a rough-around-the-edges chef who's left the fine-dining world to run a sandwich shack out of respect for its previous owner, his deceased brother. Yet White's character, *Carmy Berzatto*, is just one of an atypical bunch. There's also *Ayo Edebiri*, outstanding as his wide-eyed but deeply dedicated sous-chef *Sydney*. There are several other strong characters in this diverse cast, including *Lionel Boyce* as *Marcus*, who's intent on becoming a pastry chef and *Liza Colón-Zayas* as line cook *Tina*, who resists change. This is a problem since *Carmy* insists on a tight ship. This season begins with his slightly insane idea of gutting the place and creating a top-notch dining establishment. It's a terrific journey and leave room for dessert. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(06/12/23-06/18/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.491	1533
MSNBC	0.448	1399
HGTV	0.258	804
INSP	0.236	738
TNT	0.223	695
ESPN	0.214	670
HALL	0.204	637
CNN	0.202	631
HIST	0.200	625
TLC	0.189	590
FOOD	0.186	579
DISC	0.171	532
USA	0.170	531
TBSC	0.169	526
ID	0.150	468
TVLAND	0.148	462
BRAVO	0.141	441
HMM	0.139	434
PRMNT	0.133	414
LIFE	0.125	389
WETV	0.115	359
FX	0.114	355
A&E	0.111	347
BET	0.108	337
REELZ	0.102	318
NWSMX	0.099	309
AMC	0.099	308
GSN	0.098	306
ESPN2	0.096	298
OXY	0.091	284
COM	0.080	250
NATGEO	0.079	248
SYFY	0.078	244
NAN	0.077	241
LMN	0.073	229

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

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