

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Arrival: NTIA Reveals BEAD Program Allocations

The broadband industry's Christmas came early with **NTIA** taking the next step forward for the \$42 billion BEAD program. The agency announced the funding allocations that will be made to each state, territory and D.C. by the program's close Monday morning.

"We're going to be able to connect every person in America to reliable high speed internet by 2030," President *Joe Biden* said during a White House press conference. "I promised to be a president for all Americans, whether or not they voted for me or whether or not they voted for these laws. These investments will help all Americans. We're not going to leave anyone behind."

He offered shoutouts to Sen. *Joe Manchin* (D-WV), who attended the conference, as well as to the companies and organizations in attendance who helped sign customers up for the Affordable Connectivity Program. He noted that the White House is working with Congress on ways to extend the program. Right now, projections have the ACP running out of funding early next year.

States, D.C. and territories will receive their formal notice of allocation on Friday, and they will then have 180 days to submit their initial proposals describing how they propose to run their individual grant programs. Once those proposals are submitted, those eligible entities will be allowed to request access to at least 20% of their allocated funds. The submission of final proposals and the release of all remaining funds must occur

no later than 12 months after the initial proposal is approved.

Texas is walking away with the biggest chunk of funding, receiving more than \$3.3 billion to build out broadband from border to border. Other states surpassing the \$1 billion mark were known as being primarily rural or for their larger sizes. That list includes Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Organizations, lawmakers and other stakeholders stepped out to applaud the landmark occasion, with **ACA Connects** saying it has worked actively with states for nearly a year to help them determine how to maximize use of the funds about to come their way. **USTelecom** CEO *Jonathan Spalter* attended the press conference and applauded the administration, NTIA and agency head *Alan Davidson* for bringing the program to this point. **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** CEO *Shirley Bloomfield* was also on the scene, tweeting the event felt like a broadband reunion of everyone in the space.

INCOMPAS CEO *Chip Pickering* said he was immensely proud that his association was the first in the broadband industry to support Internet for All.

"The historic investment we have seen in the past two years has shown that we are ready to meet the moment and end the digital divide. It was an honor to be at today's ceremony at the White House," he said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing to advocate on behalf of our members and work

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with this Administration and Congress to connect all Americans and provide Internet for all.”

NCTA also used the moment to highlight its cable provider members and the way they’re already putting grant dollars from other programs to work. In an online post, it spoke of **Charter’s** plans to build nearly 100,000 miles of broadband infrastructure through its RDOF expansion and **GCI’s** use of \$25 million in ReConnect funds and \$50 million of its own capital to bring fiber to Alaska’s Aleutian Islands.

“Cable providers have demonstrated their expertise and experience in building broadband to these communities and are ready to partner with federal and state governments to ensure BEAD’s success,” it said.

DIAMOND SPORTS PREPARING TO DROP DIAMONDBACKS

Diamond Sports is due to make its next rights payments to the **Arizona Diamondbacks** on Saturday, but its latest bankruptcy court activity indicates it wants to cut the team from **Bally Sports Arizona**. In a Thursday emergency motion, Diamond alleges that it loses “significant sums” on the Diamondbacks deal, which extends through Dec. 31, 2035. “The current costs associated with performing under the Diamondbacks Agreement outweigh the revenues the Debtors are able to obtain through broadcasting Diamondbacks games pursuant to the Diamondbacks Agreement. As such, the Debtors have concluded that the Diamondbacks Agreement does not fit within the Debtors’ long-term strategic plan and therefore is not necessary to the Debtors’ business,” the emergency motion said. Should the motion be approved, it is largely expected that **MLB** would step in to produce the games while the Diamondbacks search for a new partner. It acted similarly when Diamond chose not to make its rights payments to the San Diego Padres earlier this month.

FCC ENCOURAGES LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS THROUGH E-RATE

FCC Chair **Jessica Rosenworcel** is ready to make some changes to the E-Rate program. During a speech at the **American Library Association’s** annual conference, she asked her fellow commissioners to support a proposal to allow E-Rate funding to support WiFi access on school buses and hotspots in places like schools and community libraries. She dubbed the proposed changes the “Learn Without Limits” initiative, and hopes a full vote on the changes will come soon. The changes would make some aspects of the \$7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund permanent. The Fund, created in response

to the pandemic, allowed libraries and schools to connect patrons and students at home with broadband and devices.

BREEZELINE OFFERS ONLINE SAFETY EDUCATION TO SUBS

Breezeline is raising awareness about internet safety with its customers. It launched digital literacy training through a partnership with **Cyber-Seniors** to instruct older adults, those that are often the target of cybercriminals, on internet basics and easy means of protection. It has also teamed up with **CyberSecurity NonProfit** to create content including blogs and videos aimed at informing the public on ways to protect against cybercrime and promote safety online.

T-MOBILE COMMISSIONS STUDY TO ESTIMATE 2.5 GHZ LOSSES

T-Mobile is waiting for the **FCC** to release the 2.5 GHz licenses it won in Auction 108, and its most recent move to convince the agency to move is the commission of a [study](#) from **The Brattle Group**. The Commission’s auction authority has expired since the close of the auction, but T-Mobile petitioned the agency in March for special temporary authority to turn on those licenses. The Brattle Group report aimed at quantifying the costs of delaying spectrum deployment for the mobile provider and consumers, estimating that through June 30, the regulatory delay has cost Americans approximately \$1.3 billion in lost value to consumers. A delay to Sept. 30 would see Americans lose an incremental \$750 million, and the creation of 6,500 wireless industry jobs are estimated to be on hold until the licenses are issued. The study also claims the spectrum in question, if immediately put to use, would generate approximately \$28 billion in consumer welfare, with the possibility of generating up to \$37 billion.

DISNEY, ESPN UNVEIL STUDIO

ESPN got itself a new studio, and it is drawing from the same ideas **Disney** used in the production of “The Mandalorian” to blend physical space with digital and virtual technologies. Called the Catalyst Stage, it’s powered by proprietary software made by Disney Entertainment and ESPN Technology teams. The studio supports both live multi-camera productions in 1080p or UHD and cinematic-quality production and advertising projects in 4K. It’ll initially be used for ESPN, but eventually, the studio will extend to other areas within the House of Mouse.

WBD ADDS UNIFIED ID 2.0 FOR DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Warner Bros. Discovery is adding the identity solution Unified ID 2.0 to its premium entertainment, sports, news and lifestyle brands within **Max**, **discovery+** and its portfolio of digital platforms. Unified 2.0 enables enhanced personalization in a privacy-conscious fashion while maintaining the value exchange of relevant advertising. With it, WBD advertisers can leverage first-party data to target specific audiences with increased reach and scale.

FUBO LINKS WITH MARINERS

Fubo is continuing its foray into baseball as the vMVPD partnered with a fourth **MLB** franchise. It's teaming up with the Seattle Mariners to display Fubo branding at select games and have various fan engagement opportunities. Fubo will also offer season ticket holders a free 30-day trial, while non-season ticket holders can still utilize the 14-day trial. Fubo carries the Mariners' RSN **Root Sports Northwest**—a JV between the team and **Warner Bros. Discovery**—as well as national nets like **ESPN**, **Fox Sports 1** and **MLB Network**.

RATINGS

Thursday's 2023 **NBA** Draft was the most-watched Draft ever on any network, according to **Nielsen**. The first round averaged 4.93 million viewers across **ESPN** and **ABC**, peaking at 6.09 million in the 8-8:15pm timeframe. Across ESPN (both rounds) and ABC (first round), the Draft averaged 3.74 million viewers—up 23% YOY. It was also the most-watched program of the day across all of TV in all key demos.

FIBER FRENZY

Comcast is bringing its Xfinity 10G Network to the city of Duvall, Washington. The company will build the network's infrastructure over the next two years in order to offer its full suite of services to over 3,000 homes and businesses. That includes multi-gig broadband speeds for residential customers and speeds of up to 100 Gbps for business customers. The expansion is part of Comcast's \$280 million investment to bring multi-gig internet speeds to more than 4 million locations in 2023.

CTAM'S PIRACY-FREE ZONE

CTAM is debuting the StreamSafely Summer Camp, an online hub with 46 movies for kids and parents to watch without the worry that stems from pirated content. The association found in 2022 that 38% of households with kids report accessing pirated content multiple times in a year. The family-friendly movies were curated by the folks at **Common Sense Media** and will be available through August. Available films include "Encanto," "Ice Age," "School of Rock" and "Spy Kids."

PROGRAMMING

Fox News' primetime lineup is getting its official refresh. Starting July 17, *Jesse Watters* will take over the 8pm slot previously held by *Tucker Carlson* with "Jesse Watters Primetime." "The Ingraham Angle" move from 10pm up to 7pm, while "Hannity" will stay put in its 9pm slot. The late-night program "Gutfeld!" will fill in the 10pm frame and "Fox News @ Night" featuring anchor *Trace Gallagher* will cap FNC's primetime at 11pm. – One of July 4th's beloved traditions, the "Nathan's Famous Hot Dog-Eating Contest," will air live on **ESPN** platforms. The women's competition begins at 10:45am on **ESPN3**, and the men's event will air at noon on **ESPN2**. An encore presentation will be on ESPN at 5pm. – **Netflix** struck a multi-year series partnership with filmmaker *Hansal Mehta* following the launch of his maiden series on the platform, "Scoop." The deal will see him create multiple series for the streamer in the coming years. – The FIBA World Cup 2023 will also have all of its 92 games broadcast on either **ESPN+** or **ESPN2**. ESPN+ will air 86 games while six games will be exclusively on ESPN2, including the championship final Sept. 10 at 8:30am. The event tips off Aug. 25 at 4am. – The **Maximum Effort Channel** is getting a new six-hour programming block dedicated to Welsh content. It's calling it "Welsh Wednesdays" and it'll begin this week at noon. The Welsh-language TV channel **S4C** will provide content including "Bang," "Petrol Head," "Gareth Bale: Living the Dream" and "Wrexham Our Club." – Season 6 of the drama series "The Chi" will begin Aug. 6 at 9pm on **Showtime**. It'll make its streaming debut on **Paramount+ with Showtime** beginning Aug. 4. – The fourth and final season of "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series" will premiere all eight episodes Aug. 9 on **Disney+**.

PEOPLE

ACA Connects appointed *Bill Tortoriello* as its new Director, Regulatory Affairs. He'll help with the association's member education and advocacy efforts. Tortoriello joins from **UScellular** where he was Director, Regulatory Policy and was involved with regulatory and policy matters relating to infrastructure, public safety and consumer items. – *David Tashjian* is **Comcast** California's new Regional SVP for its cable business after *John Gauder* was promoted to a new position in Comcast's West Division. Tashjian will oversee all of Comcast's California region and will help move the company forward on its expansion of the Xfinity 10G Network. Tashjian first joined Comcast in 2005 and worked in a variety of roles across Delaware, Virginia and the Beltway region. – *Jon Pederson* is leaving his post as **Midco** CTIO after 38 years with the company. He began as an intern in 1985 and held several roles in technical and strategic leadership. During his time, he designed and implemented the MidcoNet internet service, Midco's digital phone product and created the company's multi-state fiber network. – Former **Charter** VP, Communications *Stacey Mitch* has joined the **Phoenix Suns and Mercury** as SVP, Communications.