

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Head Scratchers: FCC Researching Lead Cables, vMVPD Debates

The FCC is starting to dive into some complex issues as it awaits the approval of *Anna Gomez* to its fifth commissioner seat.

FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* expressed her desire for the agency to operate as a full unit of five sooner rather than later during a press conference following Thursday's open meeting, but she doesn't have a crystal ball and uncertainty remains about whether a vote on Gomez will come before Congress departs for its August recess.

When it comes to recent [reports](#) of lead cables that remain in the networks of telecom carriers, the FCC is taking a careful look to establish the truth of the situation and figure out its role in dealing with health and safety issues within the industry. Rosenworcel said the agency is now looking at the Communications Act to understand if issues like this have come to light before. Beyond that, it has also reached out to the **Council on Environmental Quality** at the White House and the **EPA** to discuss their plans and find out how the FCC can or should assist them.

"I think we're at a point in time where we just need to get some more facts at this stage. I don't think we're ready, I'm not ready at least, to sort of jump to any conclusion one way or the other," Commissioner *Brendan Carr* said after Thursday's Commission meeting. "I'm open-minded at this point."

Carr was also questioned about the ongoing debate surrounding whether streaming services should be reclassified

as vMVPDs. He has plenty of interest in the issue, but similar to the lead cable situation, there's no easy answer or opinion to offer up at this point in time.

"I am tracking it and have taken meetings on all sides of it. It's a complex issue and one that, when you look at it from a Communications Act perspective, there are concerns raised about, generally, does the Communications Act itself need an update to deal with some of these issues," he said. "I am still open-minded on the issue, am still taking meetings on the issue, but do not have a particular perspective to share on it right now."

Notably, he said he believes the [item on circulation](#) that would initiate a proceeding to understand obstacles faced by independent programmers seeking carriage on MVPD and streaming platforms is ultimately a separate issue, even if it sounds like the two could be connected.

Notable actions from Thursday's meeting include the adoption of an order giving entities like Tribal libraries greater access to E-Rate funding. Tribal college and university libraries will now qualify for the program for their role as public libraries in their communities, and a Tribal community representative will be added to the **Universal Service Administrative Company's** board of directors. Moving forward, USAC will also provide increased outreach and training to Tribal applicants.

In another win for Tribal communities, the FCC is extending its existing Tribal Libraries Pilot Program for an additional funding year. The program offers Tribal libraries one-on-one

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assistance in navigating the E-Rate application process, and it has already been well received.

“The benefits actually flow in two directions because along the way, we can learn more about what it is in our rules that impede small libraries in native communities from participating,” Rosenworcel said.

The Commission also adopted rules requiring service providers that deliver 988 calls to report outages that potentially affect service. Reportable outages are those that result in a loss of the ability of the 988 lifeline to receive, process or forward calls, potentially affecting at least 900,000 user-minutes and lasting at least 30 minutes in duration. Notice must be given to the 988 lifeline administrator, the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration** and the **Department of Veterans Affairs**.

### NETFLIX: WE'RE STILL FAR AWAY FROM STRIKE RESOLUTION

The **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers** continues to make its stand against the demands of the **WGA** and **SAG-AFTRA**, but **Netflix** leadership still claims that these strikes are not the outcome the content producers wanted. Co-CEO **Ted Sarandos** said during the company's 2Q23 earnings call late Wednesday that Netflix is committed to getting to an agreement as soon as possible that is equitable and enables the industry and everyone in it to move forward. “My dad was a member of IBEW Local 640, he was a union electrician... and I also remember on more than one occasion my dad be-

ing out on strike,” Sarandos said. “So you should know that nobody here, nobody within AMPTP and I’m sure nobody at SAG or at the WGA, took any of this lightly. But we’ve got a lot of work to do.” The team also gave a touch more insight into its advertising business and its first upfront, with Co-CEO **Greg Peters** saying the general market remains soft. But Netflix has been able to benefit from its relatively small presence in the overall ad landscape. “There’s scarcity around our inventory,” Peters said. “So I think we’re able to manage that process effectively and we’re seeing good demand and good progress on the upfront within that sort of broader soft market. But our job really now is to add as quickly as we can advertiser features that meet their needs so that we can make our offering more attractive as we scale that inventory up.”

### TELEVISIUNIVISION CONFIDENT AMID UPFRONTS, STRIKES

The growing U.S. Hispanic market continued to be a catalyst for **TelevisaUnivision** in 2Q23. The company recorded an 11% YOY growth in total revenue to \$1.2 billion, while also having its global subscription and licensing revenue increase 14% YOY thanks to the Spanish-language SVOD **ViX**. TU upped its total investments in the streamer—which included new original content, sports rights, marketing and technology—by 17% to \$846 million. ViX also saw 17% growth in total streaming hours during the quarter compared to 1Q23. But what was most encouraging on TU’s earnings call Thursday was its positive numbers on the advertising front. While many companies

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are seeing struggles in the ad world in the midst of economic uncertainty, TU had its total ad revenue grow 10% from \$668.6 million to \$737.5 million (and in Mexico, it was a 29% jump from \$220.9 million to \$284.9 million). “The timelines are pretty much the only thing we’ll have in common with the rest of the industry in the upfront,” CEO *Wade Davis* said when discussing his expectations on TU closing its U.S. upfront this year. “Early data indicates we’re going to have yet another year where we take meaningful share from English-language broadcasters. In addition, we expect to fare better than the market on pricing, where rectifying the pricing gap with the general market has been a huge area of focus for us and we’ve made significant progress.” Speaking of uncertainty, another question in advertisers’ (and investors’) minds as they make commitments is how the ongoing WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes will impact production and content being released. Davis said the strikes have “zero impact” on the company, adding that nearly 100% of TU’s production happens outside of the U.S. TU produced 24,000 hours of content in 2Q23 alone. On the linear front, TU’s core business grew in the mid-single digits despite linear revenue remaining soft due to weakness in total U.S. subscribers. What could help, though, is the fact TU now holds the rights to 17 of the 18 Liga MX teams in the U.S. and Mexico. “As I’ve said before, we can program linear and streaming as complements to one another, leveraging what’s good about both platforms to reinforce our overall ecosystem, importantly, including our distribution partners,” Davis said.

## NIelsen RENEWS COMCAST DEAL

**Nielsen** is expanding its partnership with **Comcast** after the two companies signed a new multi-year data license renewal agreement. Nielsen will grow its usage of Comcast’s return path data in its local and national TV and cross-media measurement services via Nielsen One and also expand the application of return path data for local TV measurement in the 94 markets Nielsen and Comcast share. With the new partnership, Nielsen’s panel data will improve its ability to measure audiences across platforms and devices by enabling linear addressable measurement for its National TV service. Comcast’s return path data also brings Nielsen’s big data footprint to nearly 45 million households.

## RATINGS

Tuesday’s town hall featuring former President *Donald Trump* had 2.85 million viewers P2+ and 321,000 in the A25-54 demo on **Fox News**, according to **Nielsen**. For comparison, **CNN**’s town hall with Trump [back in May](#) had 3.3 million total viewers and 781,000 A25-54. It was Fox News’ highest-rated town hall so far in the 2024 presidential cycle and helped Fox News lead the way in the overall primetime window Tuesday with 2.41 million viewers. **MSNBC** followed with 1.58 million and **CNN** trailed with 650,000. – This year was the second-most watched NBA 2K24

Summer League ever on **ESPN** platforms. The championship game averaged 434,000 viewers on ESPN, up 46% from last year.

## PROGRAMMING

**HBO** has scheduled the Season 2 premiere of “30 Coins” for this October, available to stream on **Max**. – **Adult Swim** gave the greenlight to a new Toonami anime series “Lazarus.” – **HGTV** ordered new seasons for the docuseries “Christina on the Coast” and “Christina in the Country.” Christina on the Coast will get 12 additional episodes, while Christina on the Coast will add six. The new episodes will premiere in 2024. – The HighPoint.com 400 will begin at 2:30pm on **USA** this Sunday. “Countdown to Green” will anchor pre-race coverage at 2pm—also on USA—and post-race coverage will follow the race’s conclusion on USA and **Peacock**. – We’re down to the final stages of the 2023 Tour de France. Coverage of Stage 19 will begin Friday at 7am with the “Tour de France Pre-Race Show” on **Peacock**, with race coverage starting at 7:05am. On Saturday, race coverage will begin at 7:30am, then Stage 21 will bring riders home Sunday starting at 10:10am on Peacock. An encore of Stage 21 will be played on **NBC** at 5pm. – **Telemundo Deportes** is releasing a new documentary “Excelencia en la Cancha: Selección de los EEUU” (Excellence on the Pitch: United States Women’s National Team). It’ll detail the USWNT’s origins and the journey of the team that has won four World Cups and fought for gender equality. The doc will premiere Sunday at 1pm on **Telemundo** and **Peacock**.

## PEOPLE

**Canela Media** hired *Peter Gonzalez* to be its new CTO. He’ll oversee Canela’s technology initiatives, which include the development and execution of the company’s technical strategies. Gonzalez will also collaborate with the executive team to enhance the company’s digital infrastructure and optimize operational efficiencies. Prior to Canela, Gonzalez was SVP of **WWE**’s Media Technology unit. He also was at CNNMoney for **Turner Broadcasting** and was part of the team that led the relaunch of CNBC.com while at **NBCUniversal**. – **The Hollywood Radio and Television** society extended its contract with *Melissa Grego* to 2025. Grego, who has held editorial positions at *Broadcasting & Cable*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *TVWeek*, joined HRTS as CEO in 2017. HRTS also just elected new board members for a three-year term. They include **Starz** President, Original Programming *Kathryn Busby*, **Roku** Media Head of Content *David Eilenberg* and **NBCUniversal** Scripted Content President *Lisa Katz*. Existing board members elected to a new three-year term include **Netflix** Chief Content Officer *Bela Bajaria*, **A+E Networks Group** President/Chairman *Paul Bucciari* and HRTS President and **Amazon** Head of Drama Series *Odetta Watkins*. – *Alexia Quadrani* has been upped to EVP, Investor Relations at **The Walt Disney Company**. Before coming to Disney, she served as Managing Director/Senior Analyst, U.S. Media Equity Research at **J.P. Morgan**.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Putting the 'Big' in The Big Dipper

There are a handful of pictures that are ingrained in the minds of basketball fanatics. There's the photo of *Michael Jordan* coveting his first NBA championship trophy or *Bill Russell* posing with his 11 NBA title rings, but one that's sure to live well into the future is the iconic image of *Wilt Chamberlain* with a piece of paper with a simple "100" written on it. It's just a small moment in his career that's chronicled in the three-part docuseries "Goliath" (premiered Sunday on Showtime, available to stream on **Paramount+ with Showtime**). It's a tall number for one of the most well-known tall men to grace the hardwood, but his journey to basketball stardom wasn't easy in the slightest. Taking you through the documentary is a litany of interviews—such as *Pat Riley*, *Jerry West* and *Kevin Garnett*—but at times you'll hear Chamberlain's voice narrating certain parts. Though Chamberlain passed away in 1999, the docuseries' crew cast a voice actor to read some of Chamberlain's quotes, which was then morphed with AI technology to better match Chamberlain's voice/tone. "Despite the fact that he's so famous, there's very little archival of him just talking that isn't other people's TV interviews that are edited and packaged with music and all this stuff that limits our ability to use them," Director *Chris Dillon* told **CFX**. "We thought this might be a way to bring an experience of Wilt into the documentary more." Chamberlain's voice wasn't the only difficult thing to acquire—in fact, the docuseries went to the design studio Manual Cinema to use cinematic tools like shadow puppetry to add another layer of creativity and combat the lack of photos, videos and raw tidbits to detail Chamberlain's life. "The manual cinema was a lifesaver," Director *Rob Ford* said. "It was really born out of desperation and necessity to bring a third visual element to the film just to have another layer of intrigue." – *Noah Ziegler*

### REVIEWS

"Hijack," **Apple TV+**. We mentioned our enthusiasm for this new series last week but will add details here. Playing *Sam Nelson*, a professional negotiator who is onboard a passenger jet, *Idris Elba* supplies the star power. While Nelson is plenty nuanced, he's hardly the most arresting character. Indeed, creators *George Kay* and *Jim Field Smith* have woven a web of secondary characters and plotlines. There's the estranged wife and son hoping Nelson makes it home alive; and the estranged wife's boyfriend, who happens to be a detective. He phones a former girlfriend (the wonderful *Archie Panjabi*), a senior aviation-safety official, who informs authorities of the hijacking. Along with a small group of British politicians who become involved with the hijacking, there's the hijackers, a diverse coalition whose experience level seems wide. A quibble: at times these secondary stories slow things. Fortunately, the narrative recovers rapidly and suspense reigns. For "24" fans, the frenetic pace will seem familiar. – "Praise Petey," series premiere, 10pm, Friday, **Freeform**. Speaking of derivative elements, viewers who enjoy the TV series references in "Family Guy" eps will like this enjoyable animated entry from Freeform. Indeed, Family seems ubiquitous on Freeform. While "Petey" doesn't mention specific series, its plots are redolent of "Schitt's Creek" and other series. Speaking of Creek, Annie Murphy's voice has the lead role here. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(07/10/23-07/16/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.464</b>	<b>1449</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.394</b>	<b>1229</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.365</b>	<b>1139</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.252</b>	<b>786</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.234</b>	<b>729</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.230</b>	<b>718</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.215</b>	<b>671</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.208</b>	<b>650</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.200</b>	<b>626</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.194</b>	<b>607</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.184</b>	<b>575</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.176</b>	<b>548</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.162</b>	<b>505</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.161</b>	<b>502</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.155</b>	<b>485</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.130</b>	<b>407</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.126</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.117</b>	<b>366</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.110</b>	<b>342</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.108</b>	<b>338</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.106</b>	<b>330</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.104</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>315</b>
<b>PRMNT</b>	<b>0.100</b>	<b>313</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.097</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.095</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>COM</b>	<b>0.091</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>TUDN</b>	<b>0.084</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.081</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>NWSMX</b>	<b>0.078</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.073</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>FETV</b>	<b>0.070</b>	<b>220</b>

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



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