

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Another Round: Gomez's First Meeting Marked by Title II Vote

Anna Gomez had a memorable first meeting as an FCC Commissioner. Thursday saw the agency vote 3-2 to launch a new proceeding on the regulation of broadband as a Title II service.

While the argument is one that we've heard before, the chatter around the big vote at the Commission was noticeably quieter than the commotion in Dec. 2017 when a vote brought forth by then-Chairman Ajit Pai to abandon a Title II regulatory regime was disrupted by a bomb threat. This time around, a warning was issued ahead of the meeting that anyone attempting to interrupt the meeting's proceedings or directly engage with one of the Commissioners during the meeting would be escorted from the facility, and it didn't evoke any moans or groans from the in-person audience.

That doesn't mean the Republican members of the Commission allowed the vote to move forward without having their dissents to the Title II NPRM heard. Commissioner *Brendan Carr*'s comments lasted for more than 20 minutes as he refuted Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel*'s claims that the NPRM did not allow for rate regulation and the like. He also said this attention on ISPs was misguided. From his view, broadband providers have been investing more funding into networks than ever, pushing high speeds and lowering prices.

"It's the tech companies, not ISPs, that have emerged as dominant gatekeepers that are abusing market power. Big Tech is the one blocking the sharing of disfavored news stories, not

ISPs," Carr said. "Indeed, it's interesting the Biden administration right now is currently suing **Google** and others just across the river because the administration believes that they have too much power, that they must be reined in. And yet over here, on this side of the river, the FCC is proposing to extend new protections to those very same companies through Title II."

In Gomez's first comments on an item up for Commission vote, she said net neutrality principles are not about controlling internet content or stifling innovation, but ensuring that consumers are protected as the internet and broadband ecosystems thrive. "We must prioritize consumers. We must pay attention to communities who have been historically left on the wrong side of the digital divide. We all risk to lose out by not taking action to ensure that we have proper guidelines in place," Gomez said. "It is historically underserved communities who risk to lose the most."

Gomez, the first Latina to serve as an FCC Commissioner in more than two decades, went on to share her comments in Spanish. The agency will have some accessibility work to do if she continues to share her comments in both languages as her Spanish comments were not shared via closed captioning or by the sign language interpreter at the meeting.

Of course, advocates and lawmakers on both sides of the debate chimed in shortly after the item was adopted. In a statement, Reps. *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA) and *Bob Latta* (R-OH) strongly urged the FCC to reverse course on the rulemaking which they believe will "weaken services, stifle inno-

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vation and jeopardize American communications leadership.” In the cheering section were folks like **Public Knowledge** and **INCOMPAS** who applauded the Commission for taking action when Congress has been unable to agree on a bipartisan piece of legislation.

The next step forward will be the public comment period. The FCC hasn't released the NPRM for review yet, but comments are likely to be due 30 days after its publication in the federal register.

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AT&T CELEBRATES BROADBAND GROWTH, GIVES INTERNET AIR UPDATE

AT&T stock rose more than 6% Thursday as it celebrated 468,000 postpaid phone net adds and 296,000 AT&T Fiber net adds in 3Q23. The company's total broadband net gains, excluding DSL, were 15,000, more than offsetting losses across its non-fiber offerings. AT&T's confidence in its fiber strategy is stronger than ever with CEO/President *John Stankey* saying on the company's earnings call that where it builds fiber, it wins. “We're exceeding our expectations for penetration in new markets. Additionally, the accretive mix shift to higher-value fiber plans has driven our fiber ARPU up nearly 9% year-over-year,” he said. “Look no further than how fiber is fueling a surge in broadband revenue growth.” Broadband revenues rose 9.8% YOY with fiber growth skyrocketing by 26.9%. Beyond its fiber expansion, AT&T began rolling out its Internet Air fixed wireless product in August. Since then, 25,000 subscribers have taken to the plan. Stankey hasn't been the strongest proponent of fixed wireless products in the past, but Internet Air allows the provider to continue to serve customers in areas where it is soon preparing to replace its infrastructure with fiber. “It allows us to move into our process of shutting down infrastructure in places where we need to ultimately pull out costs and shut down our network and infrastructure, and it becomes a tool in allowing us to do that and that's how we intend to use it,” Stankey said.

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CABLE-TEC EXPO NOTEBOOK

Cable-Tec Expo came to a close Thursday, with attendance up 5% from the last time the show was in Denver in 2017. **SCTE** put attendance at “several thousand.” Planning is already underway for 2024 when the conference will take place in Atlanta from Sept. 23-26. It will be chaired by **Cox Communications** President *Mark Greatrex* and **Liberty Latin America** President and CEO *Balan Nair*. This

week's gathering featured attendees from 61 countries, 35 peer-reviewed Fall Technical Forum sessions, more than 330 speakers, 9 tracks, 100 sessions and 345 exhibits. – **SCTE** Cable-Tec Expo celebrated its 40th anniversary Wednesday night with food, drinks, live music and a ton of accolades. The night's honorees included *Serge Kasongo*, who was given the Wilt J. Hildenbrand Jr. Rising Leader Award. The **Comcast** Director of National Field Connectivity and Operations spoke about how his family left the Democratic Republic of the Congo, trading its civil war for apartheid in South Africa before eventually finding their way to Philadelphia. “I joined a company that really presented me with opportunities I never thought were really possible: free cable and internet,” Kasongo joked. He continued that he met amazing leaders who provided him with opportunities, imploring those in the room to do the same for others. “As the kid that could still be mining for less than \$1 a day, I want to thank everyone that I've had the opportunity of working with,” he said. Other honorees include Chairman's Award winner *Elad Nafshi*, EVP Chief Network Officer of Comcast, Chapter Leader of the Year *Kenn Willard* of SCTE's Crystal Coast Chapter and 2023 Member of the Year *Sam Acoff*, headend manager for Comcast. **Cox Business** VP, Product *Megan Dover* was named the Women in Technology Award winner by SCTE, **The WICT Network** and **Cablefax**. “I have grown immensely and I've truly come to understand the value of the gift it is to have someone champion you,” she said. “I strive to be that kind of force for the next generation of leaders not only within Cox, but in our industry as a whole.”

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TENNIS CHANNEL LAUNCHING DTC PRODUCT IN 2024

Tennis Channel is joining the direct-to-consumer ranks. The network's DTC platform is expected to launch in the U.S. early next year with access to the 24/7 linear channel alongside live and on-demand matches and original programming. Tennis Channel selected **Sportradar** to develop the platform. Sportradar will use its OTT solution to manage the end-to-end workflows of the service, which includes the UX design, development of CTV apps for platforms such as **Samsung TV**, **Amazon Fire TV**, **Roku** and **Apple TV**, and the backend including video encoding and integration of third-party technical enhancements. Another key feature is MVPD integration to service authenticated cable customers as well as dynamic advertising integration.

DISH, T-MOBILE SHAKE HANDS ON SPECTRUM DEAL CHANGE

DISH and **T-Mobile** have amended the spectrum purchase agreement that would allow DISH to buy all of **Sprint's** 800 MHz spectrum for approximately \$3.59 billion, extending the deadline for purchase to April 1, 2024. The two companies entered into the amendment on Oct. 15 and **DOJ** has approved it. In connection with the extension, DISH agreed to make an upfront payment of \$100 million to T-Mobile within three business days from the date the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia enters an Amended Final Judgment. T-Mobile has the right to pursue an alternative offer between now and April 1, 2024 provided that DISH retains the first right to purchase the spectrum before April 1, 2024.

DIRECTV, DELTA FLY TOGETHER

DirectTV is putting an 18-channel TV lineup on select Boeing 767-400 aircraft flying long-haul domestic routes on Delta Air Lines. It'll be the first time a U.S.-based airline integrates live TV into seatback screens on widebody planes. Delta and DirecTV will use Viasat's satellite network to make the offering available. The channel lineup will include the broadcast nets, **Bravo, CNBC, CNN, ESPN, ESPN2, Food Network, Telemundo** and **USA**.

BREEZELINE STREAM TV HITS SC

Breezeline has now rolled out its Stream TV offering to all of its markets, with the operator launching the service in South Carolina. That includes Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg and Barnwell Counties. The cloud-based platform comes with features such as rewind, start over and catch up during programs in progress, including live sports, while also offering a voice command capability through Google Assistant.

CARRIAGE

The **NFL** app and **NFL+** are now available on **Vizio** smart TVs in the U.S. **NFL+** comes with a live stream of **NFL Network** and **NFL RedZone** as well as live out-of-market preseason games, live local and national audio for every game, **NFL Films'** archives and more. The DTC service currently goes for \$6.99/month or \$49.99/year, or for \$14.99/month or \$99.99/year for the premium tier. The NFL will also integrate Vizio's subscription management service Vizio Account later this year.

FIBER FRENZY

Google Fiber is making its entrance into South Carolina, announcing plans to build in Tega Cay. It's part of the company's project in the greater Charlotte metro area. Construction in Tega Cay is slated to begin in early 2024. – Following the launch of 10 Gig internet to commercial customers in Colby,

Kansas, **Vyve Broadband** launched 8 Gig symmetrical service for residents in the area.

DOING GOOD

Comcast is donating \$100,000 to five community colleges in California's Central Valley. The five colleges—Fresno City College, Clovis Community College, Madera College, Reedley College and College of the Sequoias—will receive \$20,000 each. The money will support younger students interested in pursuing a career in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. – **Comcast** is also adding the availability of live American Sign Language interpreting services at six Xfinity store locations in the greater Philadelphia area. The company is teaming up with the Communication Service for the Deaf to roll out the service. Customers can stop by any of the select stores to find a representative who'll use ASL video remote interpreting to access a live interpreter.

PROGRAMMING

National Geographic unveiled some more debut dates for the fall and winter. "Incredible Animal Journeys" will premiere Nov. 19 before being released Nov. 20 on **Disney+** and **Hulu**. "A Real Bug's Life" will debut on Disney+ on Jan. 24, before "Arctic Ascent with Alex Honnold" premieres on Nat Geo on Feb. 4 and on Disney+ and Hulu the following day. "Queens" will round out the new programs March 4 on Nat Geo and March 5 on Disney+ and Hulu. Additionally, the next installment of NatGeo's "Genius" franchise "Genius: MLK/X" will release its first two episodes Feb. 1. Disney+ and Hulu will have them the next day. – **CNN** FlashDocs program "Taking on Taylor Swift" will become available on **Max** on Friday. – **HBO** documentary "Stand Up & Shout: Songs from a Philly High School" will premiere Nov. 7 at 9pm, available to stream on **Max**. – An **Adult Swim** classic is returning for Season 12. "Aqua Teen Hunger Force" will premiere Nov. 26 at 11:30pm. – The **NASCAR** Cup and Xfinity Series Playoffs are going to Homestead-Miami Speedway this weekend. Coverage begins with Xfinity series practice and qualifying Friday at 6pm on **USA**. "Countdown to Green" will kick off Saturday's events at 2:30 before the Contender Boats 300 starts at 3pm—both on **USA**. **NBC** will take things over Sunday with Countdown to Green at 2pm and the 4EVER 400 at 2:30pm. – "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" returns Tuesday at 10pm on **HBO** and **Max**. The episode's featured guests include Connecticut men's basketball head coach **Dan Hurley** and **NFL** legend and "Fox NFL Sunday" co-host **Terry Bradshaw**.

PEOPLE

Michelle Powell was elevated to SVP, Customer Operations Business Integration at **Charter**. She'll be the primary liaison between Product, Engineering and Information Technology. Prior to joining Charter in 2015, Powell spent more than 20 years at **Cablevision** in business integration and billing roles.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Amateur Investigators on the Case at SundanceTV

True crime remains a crowded genre, with it difficult to find a new angle for a series. There's also the risk of turning exploitative. "True Crime Story: Citizen Detective" navigates both those challenges by chronicling everyday citizens, often loved ones of victims, who become amateur sleuths. The six-part limited series is on **SundanceTV**, **AMC+** and **Sundance Now**, with Episode 2 debuting tonight. Each episode is named for the individual citizen detective (or group) who has solved or is attempting to solve a mysterious death. They include a brother who dedicated his life to finding answers in the cold case around his sister's death in 1978 and a family that launches their own investigation into the death of their daughter and sister. In both instances, police thought a drug overdose was to blame, but the family uncovered circumstances and evidence that raised new questions—and in one instance resulted in an arrest and life sentence for murder. This latest series in SundanceTV's "True Crime Story" franchise shows the relentless pursuit of justice from a very personal level. Citizen Detective is respectful of the victims, but separates itself from other true crime series by exploring the psyches of these investigators, the techniques they deploy and what drives their quest. The term "citizen detective" may conjure images of ill-informed TikTok sleuths and true crime looky-loos, but these investigators are not doing this as a hobby or for fame. It's an obsession and a need for closure. Not all of the detectives profiled are related to victims. Episode 2 features *Rebekah Heath*, a research librarian who helped to identify bodies found in barrels in New Hampshire's Bear Brook State Park. While her connection to the case may not have been familial, it was certainly personal. "I had a very traumatic childhood. I craved a family. I craved belonging. These Jane Doe cases I researched are all nameless victims who belong somewhere," she explains. Citizen Detective is a reminder that crime fighters come in many different forms. – *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

"Babylon Berlin," 4 seasons, streaming, check guides. There's a simple way of deciding if a TV series, film, play or concert was good. That's by asking two questions: Did the show/concert etc. help me forget my life for a few minutes? Was I so engaged in what was happening on the screen or stage that I had to think for a few seconds as I reset the present? Answer either, or preferably, both those questions affirmatively and you've escaped into someone else's world. That's the case with "Babylon Berlin," a German series about life during the Weimar Republic (1918-33), as Hitler was consolidating power. With a series like this it's difficult to decide which of its elements is best. The acting, plotlines, character development and production values all vie for the top spot. Accordingly, it's a feast for viewers interested in how people lived, worked and played, during a period before one of the most studied eras of history began. Speaking of history, Babylon Berlin is loaded with historical moments; however, its characters are fictional. And, to keep the historical streaming theme going, pair Babylon with "Das Boot," a 4-season series picking up where the 1981 film of the same name ends. Along with the German and French cast, *Lizzy Caplan* (season 1) and *Vincent Kartheiser* (1 and 2) have juicy roles. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(10/09/23-10/15/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.699	2205
ESPN	0.641	2022
TBSC	0.531	1673
MSNBC	0.341	1075
HALL	0.260	820
CNN	0.255	805
HGTV	0.253	799
USA	0.190	599
INSP	0.186	588
TLC	0.176	556
FOOD	0.160	504
HIST	0.153	481
TVLAND	0.151	476
HMM	0.149	471
ESPN2	0.134	422
DISC	0.133	420
ID	0.128	403
LIFE	0.125	394
WETV	0.110	347
A&E	0.107	339
GSN	0.103	325
REELZ	0.095	299
NWSMX	0.094	296
AMC	0.093	294
TNT	0.090	285
BRAVO	0.090	283
OXY	0.087	275
NATGEO	0.079	249
TRUTV	0.079	248
ADSM	0.078	246
FRFM	0.076	241
FETV	0.075	237
FS1	0.072	227
BET	0.072	227
NAN	0.068	215

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

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