

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Broadband Banter: What's the End Game, NTIA?

We know there's more than \$42 billion of government funding coming from BEAD for unserved and underserved areas, but when can a state declare "mission accomplished?"

North Dakota Broadband Director *Brian Newby*, speaking at the US Broadband Summit in D.C. Thursday, urged NTIA to define the grand finale. "When do we know the job is done? Some states are going to call it and have to say, 'we're not going to hit these locations'... What is it? Is it when the money's been given? When it's been awarded? When the state map says it is? When it's actually deployed? What if we give money to a recipient who doesn't fulfill and therefore it didn't really actually happen?" he asked. "I've really been pushing the NTIA to say what is that end game, and they don't really want to define it."

Newby also said it's unclear what happens if there are territories that get no bids. "We know we can apply for a waiver, but we wouldn't mind knowing ahead of time what the criteria is, the rubric for the waiver," he said, adding that he doesn't understand why NTIA doesn't define the waiver criteria now so that it would be harder to change the policy if there's a new administration. About 97% of locations in North Dakota are already served. "Our carriers, cable companies, they treat serviceability as an art, and I think that they've done a really good job getting to those locations now for us," Newby said. But he added that there have been companies turning down Capital Project Fund grants because of the obligations at-

tached to the money, and he's worried carriers may see BEAD as too onerous.

The three-day conference offered a glimpse into what some state broadband directors are thinking about right now. One issue top of mind for Kansas Office of Broadband Development Director *Jade Piros* is re-funding the Affordable Connectivity Program before it runs out of money for broadband subsidies, something most expect to happen by mid-2024. "We were stumping for eight hours yesterday on the Hill, and it is not looking good," she warned. "I would encourage every provider to follow the lead of **AT&T** and start sending notices out to your ACP recipients that they better be reaching out to their Congressional representatives to re-fund that program because it is not looking pretty."

With billions of dollars up for grabs, the Summit also offered broadband providers the opportunity to make their cases on why their networks are a good fit for reaching unserved and underserved communities. And they weren't always above taking a swipe at competitors. "How many people in the room have fiber? How many people want fiber? OK, and the 20 that didn't raise their hand work for **Comcast**," quipped *Erin Scarborough*, AT&T President of Broadband & Connectivity Initiative.

Comcast Cable EVP, Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi* did a good job showcasing the capacity and reliability of the operator's network—touting how the company has invested over \$20 billion over the last five years and that after launching 100 gig speeds for businesses last year, it's working on 400 gig for next year. He highlighted how Comcast detected a fiber



Cablefax

MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

DECEMBER 6, 2023

### Have You Heard The News?

Emmy Award winning journalist, **Alicia Quarles**, is the 2023 Keynote Speaker for The Most Powerful Women Luncheon.

**Where:** The Edison Ballroom • 240 W 47th St, New York, NY

**When:** Wednesday, December 6, 2023

[REGISTER TO ATTEND](#)



cut caused by someone trying to steal copper in 120 seconds and was able to restore service to downtown Philly before the Super Bowl kickoff in February. Nafshi also got his own little dig in as well, showing a Zoom screen that was fuzzy and suggesting that was the view if you had fixed wireless. Then he showed a slide with a heavily pixelated Zoom view and said, “Or if you’re on the AT&T network, [it looks] more like that.”

Ultimately, there’s an understanding that consumers just want things to work. “Nobody cares how they got their broadband, whether it’s HFC or fiber or fixed wireless. It’s fast and reliable,” said *Justin Forde*, VP, Government Relations for **Midco**, which deploys various technologies. “When they get on the phone, they’re not asking how is my broadband getting there. They’re asking for a Midco connection... We just want to work with those cities and communities who say that they want a state-of-the-art broadband network. We’re going to put the latest and greatest in here to help you become a Midco community and become a 10 Gig City.”

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**THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL SPIKE**

**Comcast** is seeing a quadrupling of consumption of **Amazon Prime** on Thursdays for the NFL’s Thursday Night Football. “And at peak, the Amazon football game represents about one quarter of the entire Comcast network capacity,” Comcast Cable EVP, Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi* said at the U.S. Broadband Summit. It’ll be interesting to see what the numbers look like in January when **Peacock** gets its exclusive Wild Card game. On Sundays, **YouTube TV** usage goes up 7% thanks to NFL Sunday Ticket and **Netflix** usage goes down 10%, Nafshi said. He stressed that companies have to build a network that’s flexible enough to handle those peaks and adjustments, particularly given the significance of real-time video for sports. And we never know what’s going to cause a shift. “Peak usage of the internet was Sunday at 9pm. It was driven by blockbuster shows like ‘Game of Thrones’ and ‘The Walking Dead.’ During COVID, that all of a sudden shifted to 10am to 5pm, driven by work-from-home and school-from-home,” Nafshi said. “As soon as we were allowed to leave our homes, internet usage is driven by Thursday Night Football—one game shifted the entire internet service.”

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**SINCLAIR LAWYER BELIEVES DIAMOND LIQUIDATION IS NEAR**

The most recent hearing in the **Diamond Sports Group** bankruptcy saga wrapped up Wednesday, and it left everyone impacted by Diamond’s future feeling worse for wear. The hearing, [covered in-depth](#) by *Awful Announcing’s Daniel Kaplan*, saw Judge *Christopher Lopez* approve a one-season

agreement between the **NBA** and **Diamond**. A similar deal with the **NHL** is expected to come before the end of the week, but **MLB** and **Sinclair** have both put forth objections on how **Diamond** is pushing forward through the bankruptcy proceeding. Both **Sinclair** and **MLB** told the court they still have a number of unaddressed issues, and the latter plans on sending its own proposal to **Diamond** in the near future. *Lopez* has penciled in a hearing on Dec. 8 to hear more on the objections from **MLB** and **Sinclair**, but the **NBA** deal expires at the end of November, adding further complications to the court proceedings. **Sinclair** Outside Counsel *David Seligman* told the court it was a sad day for folks at the broadcaster that championed the creation of **Diamond** as he believes it is highly likely that **Diamond** will liquidate at the close of the 2024 **MLB** season.

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**REPORT: BYRON ALLEN CONSIDERS SCRIPPS STATION BUY**

*Byron Allen* is looking to expand his broadcasting portfolio, looking for funding from the private debt market for a bid on several **Scripps** stations. That’s according to a *Bloomberg* [report](#). **Allen Media Group** has been steadily expanding and has made no secret that it’s on the hunt for more M&A opportunities. In September, *Allen* put forth a \$10 billion to purchase assets

**Cablefax Executive Round Up**

**What is your company doing to ensure transparency in data collection and usage?**



**Kelsey Joyce**  
VP, Chief Privacy Officer  
**T-Mobile**

“At T-Mobile, our goal is to be upfront with customers in everything we do, especially when it comes to their privacy. Customers want transparency, choice and simplicity. Our Privacy Center and Dashboard offer them just that, including a clear view of the data we collect and how we use it, as well as simple tools and tips they can use to help protect their information at T-Mobile and beyond.”



**Mark Trudeau**  
CEO  
**OpenVault**

“OpenVault’s data collection processes are fully transparent to the operator. We work directly with their engineering departments to pull relevant data directly from their network elements. We analyze network health data to drive capacity gains and network resiliency and we use subscriber data usage volume and behavioral data to ensure subscribers have optimal bandwidth packages based on their needs. Broadband providers trust us to use the actual data their networks generate to help them optimize QoE for subscribers, get the most efficiencies out of their existing plant, and drive ARPU.”

from **Disney** that included **National Geographic**, **FX**, the **ABC** broadcast network and some local stations. He [said](#) later that month that he had private equity firms ready to support the buy, but Disney wasn't yet ready to make a deal.

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**SENATE COMMERCE COMES TOGETHER FOR AI BILL**

A bipartisan bill on artificial intelligence has arrived on the scene from members of **Senate Commerce**. The Artificial Intelligence Research, Innovation and Accountability Act of 2023, introduced Wednesday, would establish new definitions for "generative," "high-impact" and "critical-impact" AI systems. Critical-impact AI systems would be subject to a certification framework to be developed with input from an AI Certification Advisory Committee composed of industry stakeholders. Companies deploying critical-impact AI would also be required to perform detailed risk assessments outlining exactly how the organization understands, manages and mitigates risk. Consumer education is also a key piece of the legislation, with rules outlining that the **Department of Commerce** would establish a working group dedicated to providing recommendations for the development of voluntary, industry-led consumer education efforts on AI systems.

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**LRG: VMVPD SUBS CONTINUE RISE**

The top U.S. pay TV providers sustained a loss of about 465,000 net video subscribers in 3Q23, **Leichtman Research Group** finds, up from a pro forma net loss of about 385,000 in the same quarter last year. Top providers now total 71.47 million subscribers, with vMVPDs making up 14.7 million. Top vMVPDs added about 1.33 million subscribers this quarter, led by **YouTube TV's** gain of 600,000 to bring it to 6.5 million total. **Fubo** followed with 310,000 adds for 1.48 million total, while **Hulu + Live TV** reached 4.6 million after 300,000 adds and **Sling TV** at 2.12 million following 117,000 adds for the quarter. Leading cable providers had a net loss of about 1.02 million video subscribers. **Comcast** took the biggest hit with a loss of 490,000, followed by **Charter** losing 327,000 and **Altice USA** losing 79,400. Comcast and Charter still lead with 14.5 million and 14.38 million subscribers, respectively, while Altice USA came in at 2.33 million. **DirecTV** led the "other traditional services" category with 11.85 million despite having 500,000 video losses (includes DBS, U-verse and DirecTV Stream). **DISH** was behind with 6.72 million subscribers (losing 181,000) and **Verizon FIOS** as well with 3.08 million (losing 79,000).

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**DIRECTV ENCOURAGING SUBS TO REFER A FRIEND**

**DirecTV** is ready to expand the friend group, introducing a program for subscribers to receive rewards for referring others to the provider. Through the Refer a Friend Program, DirecTV customers who refer someone to subscribe can get a \$100 gift card from Amazon, Home Depot or Walmart for the first five people who qualify. Those

first five who are referred will also receive a \$100 gift card.

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**LPGA, ESPN MAKE TWO-YEAR DEAL**

**ESPN** signed a two-year agreement with the **LPGA** to put featured group coverage at eight LPGA Tour events exclusively on ESPN+. ESPN+ will have one feed showing the rounds of four featured groups each day of the selected tournaments. Two of those groups will be in the morning and two will be in the afternoon. The deal includes the CME Group Tour Championship that began Thursday.

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**BET+ ADDS TO FAST SPACE**

**BET+** is putting a litany of its original movies in the FAST space for the first time. The streamer is partnering with **Pluto TV** to put 24 BET+ movies on the FAST platform through April. The titles will be available on the BET and BET Her channels in addition to original channels under the "Movies" category including Black Cinema, Pluto TV Thrillers, Pluto TV Love Stories, Pluto TV Drama, Pluto TV Horror and Pluto TV Comedy. BET+'s slate on Pluto includes "A Christmas Surprise," "A Rich Christmas," "The Christmas Clapback" and "Soul Santa." Other movies like "Bid for Love," "The Delrhonda Hood Story," "North of the 10" and "Fruits of the Heart" will arrive on Pluto in the near future.

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**XFINITY MOBILE HOLIDAY PUSH**

**Comcast** is getting in the holiday spirit, rolling out an Xfinity Mobile deal for new and existing customers to get one line of its Unlimited Intro plan free for one year when they sign up for a line of its Unlimited plan. A value of \$360, the deal will run through Jan 10.

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**PROGRAMMING**

**Starz** acquired the rights to "Mary & George" in the U.S. and Canada. The show will debut on the platform in 2024. - **Max** renewed its animated series "Harley Quinn" for a fifth season. The announcement comes following the spinoff series "Kite Man: Hell Yeah!" which will premiere in 2024.

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**PEOPLE**

*Michelle Mendelovitz* was named the Head of **Mattel Television Studios**, where she'll oversee the development, production and distribution of the company's episodic content on broadcast and streaming platforms. She held senior roles at **Disney Television Studios**, **Apple TV+**, **Sony Pictures Television** and **CBS Television Network** and was most recently an Executive Producer at Hiddenlight Productions, which was founded by *Hillary* and *Chelsea Clinton*. - Former co-head of **The CW Network** *John Maatta* is creating an L.A.-based firm **Frost LLP** alongside *Christopher Frost* and *Josh Stambaugh*. The firm will represent corporate clients in media and entertainment, music and recording arts as well as public figures, C-Suite executives and more.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## A New Look into a Basketball Legend

Candace Parker holds many labels. She's a back-to-back Illinois Class AA state champion, back-to-back NCAA women's basketball national champion, three-time WNBA champion and two-time WNBA MVP and current NBA analyst for NBA TV and TNT. But the women's basketball icon has much more to tell in ESPN Films' "Candace Parker: Unapologetic" (premiered Sunday on ESPN and available to stream on ESPN+). It's difficult to find new ways to portray someone who's been in the spotlight for much—if not all—of their adult life, but ESPN dives beneath the surface with its use of old highlights, newspaper clippings and home movies to give a real sense of what Parker's upbringing was like. "There is a really unique combination of things at play when we started to make this film, and it was really the combination of Candace being at the twilight of her history playing career and the dawn of her promising broadcast career. Combine that with all the personal achievements and all the personal growth that she's gone through, it just felt like, 'What an amazing opportunity to document one of the greatest of all time,'" director Joie Jacoby said in an opening monologue. Growing up in Naperville, Illinois, Parker earned the nickname "Can-Do" because of her competitive drive and fierce desire to win. That developed into a basketball player generating lots of attention at the high school level, which ESPN bolsters by showing videos of her dunking and causing a frenzy for being one of the few women's basketball players at the time to dunk in a competitive game. Beyond her eventual storied college and professional basketball career is a mother of two. While in the past Parker hasn't showcased her personal life often, ESPN does well with its interviews to give a true sense of what Parker holds in high regard as well as the difficult situations she's managed like pregnancy issues, injuries and personal struggles. Accompanied by highlights and several anecdotes, one thing is clear about Parker's mindset: she won't apologize for being the person she is. — Noah Ziegler

### REVIEWS

"Fellow Travelers," 9pm, Sunday, **Showtime**. Don't take it the wrong way, but this new series, which includes same-sex relationships, some important American history and quite a bit of well-done drama (and some over-the-top moments too), doesn't always know where it's going. Is 1950s closeted gay sex "Fellow"'s main element or is life in the McCarthy era more the point? Or are complications of keeping homosexual relationships quiet during that time why we're watching? There's also a storyline that explores racism, which certainly deserves screentime. Yet with everything else occurring in this series, this plotline lacks depth and feels like it was added late in the game. All that said, we're still recommending viewers try this series, partly because *Matt Bohmer*, *Jonathan Baily* and *Allison Williams* turn in strong performances. (A warning: though production values aren't bad, the crow's feet and artificial turkey neck Williams endures during several scenes are jarring. Don't let them detract from her fine performance as Bohmer's wife, who's wise to her husband's dalliances.) Other critics have argued Fellow could have been top-notch television had the series centered its plot on the tortured relationship of Bohmer's, Baily's and Williams' characters. We agree. A much better, though very different, Showtime series is "The Curse," which follows Fellow, at 10pm. It just might be the best dark comedy of the season. — Seth Arenstein

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(11/06/23-11/12/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.602</b>	<b>1896</b>
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.585</b>	<b>1844</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.415</b>	<b>1308</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.357</b>	<b>1125</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.249</b>	<b>784</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.214</b>	<b>675</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.213</b>	<b>671</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.192</b>	<b>606</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.186</b>	<b>587</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.184</b>	<b>580</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.181</b>	<b>571</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.180</b>	<b>568</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.164</b>	<b>517</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>483</b>
<b>ESPN2</b>	<b>0.143</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.142</b>	<b>446</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.135</b>	<b>425</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.119</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.102</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.102</b>	<b>320</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.091</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.091</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.089</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.086</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>ADSM</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>NWSMX</b>	<b>0.076</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.075</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>FETV</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.066</b>	<b>209</b>

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

**100FX Cablefax 100**

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