

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

WRC 2023: Where U.S. Spectrum Policy Stands and Where It Needs to Go

With the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference done and dusted, U.S. associations, agencies and regulators are taking stock of how the nation fared and what it all means for domestic spectrum policy moving forward.

NCTA VP/Associate General Counsel *Traci Biswese* said at an **American Enterprise Institute** panel event Monday the association was pleased with the wins from WRC, and it is now turning its attention to the national spectrum strategy laid out by **NTIA** and continuing the conversation around the next stage of U.S. spectrum policy. She's particularly excited to see how **NTIA** decides to move forward with the areas around the 6, 7 and 8 GHz bands and the opportunity to use that spectrum to push WiFi to the next level.

"WiFi 7 is able to use channel sizes up to 320 MHz, and there's kind of a stranded channel at the top of the 6 GHz band of 125 MHz. If we just continue to extend things up to the bottom of the 7 GHz band, that will allow for full 320 MHz channels, which will really enable WiFi 7 to realize its full potential," she said. "That comes into play where we see continued advances in VR and AR technologies as well as other applications."

She also highlighted other major use cases for unlicensed spectrum including private networks where agricultural entities can cater their network to what they need and how they need to use the spectrum. **CTIA** SVP, Spectrum *Umair Javed* believes

the U.S. is leading the world when it comes to unlicensed and shared spectrum. Over the last two years, the U.S. has made approximately 1,350 MHz of almost contiguous spectrum available for unlicensed or shared use, and no nation is remotely close to keeping up. But that won't be enough to ensure the U.S. remains a global leader in the years to come.

"If you look at what the rest of the world is doing, we're trailing in the availability of midband licensed spectrum... a lot of countries left the conference with the potential for even more spectrum," he said. "The second place where we see the gap is in capacity. Data demand has been growing twofold every two years for the past 10 years. Right now, we don't have a pipeline of licensed midband spectrum in the United States to continue to keep up with that demand."

The **FCC** remains hamstrung without its spectrum auction authority, and there's no obvious signs that Congress will give it back any time soon. At the same time, **NTIA's** national spectrum strategy drew criticism for merely identifying spectrum bands for study, not for use.

"I don't necessarily disagree, but I also think getting all of those agencies to sign off on a document that large and that aggressive is a pretty big feat and it helps us in our efforts to try and identify spectrum," *Kate O'Connor*, Chief Counsel for the **House Communications Subcommittee**, said. She said **House Commerce** members are continuing to look at spectrum issues and pull together legislation that can help pave a path forward for the nation.

Happy Holidays

FROM **Cablefax**

THE THREE PACKAGES OFFERED THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

1. Five awards entries to use for:
 - » The Faxies
 - » The Diversity List
 - » Most Powerful Women
2. Table of 10 at Most Powerful Women Awards Ceremony
3. Three 1-year Cablefax Daily Subscriptions

CLAIM MY
HOLIDAY OFFER

Preparations for the next World Radiocommunication Conference, to be held in 2027, began immediately following the conclusion of the 2023 gathering, and the questions about what the major topics of discussion will be are already being asked. Biswese believes AI will absolutely be intermingled in a number of discussions around spectrum management and cybersecurity.

Former FCC Commissioner *Michael O’Rielly* drew attention to the November election as a major moment to watch as that will tell the nation which administration will be leading the way to WRC 2027, but he also challenged the notion that the world can’t come together to talk about spectrum issues prior to that point. With technology and data usage skyrocketing, he wonders if it is time to change the status quo.

“There are some things in my mind that I think will be important, but some of this is changing on a quicker basis, and having a conference every four years makes little sense,” he said.

CHARTER, TELEVISAUNIVISION STRIKE DEAL WITH STREAMING

Charter is continuing to push for a new video model in its carriage renewals. It shook hands with *TelevisaUnivision* Monday on a new carriage agreement with renewals for 11 networks and will see some Spectrum video customers gain access to Spanish-language streamer **Vix** later this year. Customers who receive TelevisaUnivision channels as part of their Spectrum TV Select or Mi Plan Latino packages will receive access to the new ad-supported premium subscription version of Vix that is set to launch later this year. TelevisaUnivision will also be a launch partner on a new low-cost Spanish-language internet-delivered video package that Charter plans to launch in the coming months, and its U.S. channels will be included in the channel lineup.

OPTIMUM MOBILE OPEN FOR SMB

It’s a new chapter for **Altice USA’s** Optimum Business brand. Optimum Business is rolling out Optimum Mobile for small- and medium-sized businesses, allowing customers to add mobile to the existing offerings of internet, voice, TV, WiFi, security and managed services. Businesses can choose from four plans in addition to selecting up to 20 mobile lines per account. Optimum Business is offering a deal through April 7 for customers to get in on the new mobile offering, letting customers get internet plans starting at \$55/month for one year with the ability to add mobile and save up to \$40/month on internet.

NEW STREET ESTIMATES ACP IMPACT FOR CHARTER

Firms are continuing their work to estimate the impact of the seemingly imminent shutdown of the **FCC’s** Affordable Connectivity Program, and **New Street Research** is starting to get an idea of what that transition could look like for **Charter**. In a Monday note, it said that 9.9 million of the 22.1 million ACP recipients use the subsidy to access fixed broadband services, and its estimates that 4.1-4.8 million of those subscribers belong to Charter. It believes that 1.8 million, or 45% of those, are new adopters of broadband overall and therefore are also new Charter subscribers. Another 1.1 million are estimated to have already been broadband subscribers, using the subsidy to add on new products like video, and an estimated 1.3 million used the subsidy to cut down on their broadband bill and use the \$30 for other bills. Approximately 1.3 million subscribers, or 32% of Charter’s ACP beneficiaries, used the subsidy to move up to higher broadband speed tiers. It then used methodologies to determine how many subscribers were at risk. Given that Charter’s low-income tier is currently priced at \$25, New Street believes that 50% will keep that level of service even without the ACP benefit with the remainder unsubscribing from broadband altogether or moving to a competitor. Some 25% of those on a higher tier will keep their speeds while the rest are expected to defer to their previously-held plans, and 25% of those that added products like video are expected to hold onto them after ACP benefits lapse. Based on New Street’s methodology, which it plans to improve in the coming weeks, it believes Charter has 200,000-300,000 subscribers at risk with a potential loss of \$700-900 million in revenue. “One of the benefits of ACP was keeping customers who were periodically connected, permanently connected,” New Street Research said. “The social cost of households having intermittent broadband is significant, as are the costs to the carrier of dealing with higher churn.

COX ENTERPRISES INTRODUCES SHINING TECHSTARS

A variety of focus areas were covered with the 2024 Techstars Impact powered by **Cox Enterprises** class. This year’s cohort of companies span categories like accessibility, women’s health, education, corporate impact and equity. The class even dips into the streaming realm as **Soleil Space**, a streaming video platform for filmmakers of color across global South diasporas, joins eight other businesses in a three-month acceleration and growth course that includes mentorship provided by Cox Enterprises and those within the Techstars networks. The course

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ends with the Techstars Impact Demo Day on April 18, which will feature the nine companies sharing their vision and progress from the program. Since 2016, programs from accelerator Techstars powered by Cox have helped launch more than 120 companies, with over half of the entire portfolio based in Atlanta. Collectively, the startups have raised more than \$300 million.

FIBER FRENZY

Spectrum is rolling out its internet, mobile, TV and voice services to over 1,200 residents and businesses in Anderson County, Texas. It's part of **Charter's** investment of approximately \$5 billion to connect the unserved, with about \$1.2 billion of that total offset by its **FCC** Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction wins. Spectrum Internet provides speeds of up to 1 Gbps as well as its Advanced WiFi product for residential and small business customers.

ON THE CIRCUIT

FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr* will take the stage as a speaker at the annual [ACA Connects Summit](#). This year's edition will run March 5-7 in Washington, D.C.

RATINGS

There was plenty of memorable football this weekend, but **ESPN** will remember the Ravens' win over the Texans for a while. Its broadcast of Saturday's game became the network's most-watched NFL game ever with 31.77 million viewers, according to **Nielsen** fast nationals, beating out the 31.2 million set by last year's Cowboys-Buccaneers playoff game. That 31.77 million figure is also expected to rise once final numbers are in, but it's also good for Disney's most-watched game outside of Super Bowl broadcasts. The Texans-Ravens game peaked at 36.2 million viewers from 6:30-6:45pm. – **NBC Sports** hit its own milestone with the Lions' 31-23 win over the Buccaneers, notching its most-watched NFL Divisional Playoff game since 1994. The game had a total audience delivery of 40.4 million viewers across **NBC**, **Peacock**, **NBC Sports Digital** and **NFL Digital** platforms, according to **Nielsen** custom fast national data and **Adobe Analytics**. Peacock led the way for the simulstream crowd (Peacock, NBC Sports Digital and NFL Digital) that had an average minute audience of 3.3 million viewers. That's NBC Sports' third consecutive playoff simulstream audience of at least 3 million viewers. – The 29th Critics Choice Awards on Jan. 14 accumulated over 1 million total viewers on **CW Network**, according to Nielsen. That's the ceremony's largest audience on the network in four years and a 14% improvement from last year's edition. The broadcast peaked at more than 1.14 million total viewers in the 9-9:30pm window. The event also saw improvements in certain demographics including A18-49 (rising 50% YOY to 202,000) and A25-54 (increasing 37% YOY to 239,000).

PROGRAMMING

The idea of *Ludacris* developing a series isn't so ludicrous for **BET+**. The rapper is developing a scripted dramedy series based on his upbringing and career in the music scene. Release details are still to come. – The election results of the 2024 Baseball Writers' Association of America's Hall of Fame class will be unveiled on **MLB Network** on Tuesday at 6pm. The three-hour announcement program will begin at 4pm from Cooperstown, New York. – **Netflix** is turning a pair of *Harlan Coben* novels into limited series: "Missing You" and "Run Away." Premiere dates are still to be announced, but filming for Missing You will begin this spring. Additionally, the streamer announced *Lindsay Lohan* will star in a new series "Our Little Secret." Details of when that'll be released remain Netflix's little secret for now. – "Rock the Block" will return for its fifth season on **HGTV** come March 4 at 9pm. Max will have it to stream. – A three-part docuseries chronicling the rise of the hip-hop group Run DMC is coming to **Peacock**. "Kings From Queens: The RUN DMC Story" will release on the platform Feb. 1 with archival footage and interviews with fellow hip-hop stars. – "Vanderpump Rules" is getting a spinoff. "The Valley," which will feature Vanderpump alums *Kristen Doute*, *Jax Taylor* and *Brittany Cartwright*, will premiere this spring on **Bravo**. – **Hulu** acquired "Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story." It's the first-ever docuseries on the band's background and rise to fame. All past and present members will be featured in the four-part program that'll premiere April 26 on **Hulu** in the U.S. and soon after on **Star+** in Latin America and **Disney+** in all other territories.

PEOPLE

It's a shakeup at the top of **Fox's** advertising sales sector. *Marianne Gambelli*, Fox's President, Advertising Sales, Marketing and Brand Partnerships, announced her retirement after a career that spanned over four decades. *Jeff Collins* was picked as her successor. Gambelli first joined the Fox family in 2017 as President, Advertising Sales for **Fox News** and **Fox Business Network** before being elevated to oversee ad sales efforts across the Fox portfolio. Before Fox she'd spent time as Chief Investment Officer for **Horizon Media** and as President, Sales and Marketing for **NBCUniversal**. Collins came to Fox in 2019 after a stint as CRO of Viant Technology. He's credited with leading the company's ad tech expansion. Collins also spent 18 years with **Turner Broadcasting**. – **Scripps** also had a retirement among leadership. Chief Legal Officer *Bill Appleton*, who's been with the company since 2008, is signing off at the end of 2024. Scripps tapped Deputy General Counsel *Dave Giles* to replace Appleton. Appleton played a key role in several Scripps' acquisitions including **Granite Broadcasting** in 2014, **Nexstar-Tribune** spinoff stations in 2018 and **ION Media** in 2021. Giles—who was a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *USA Today* before attending law school—currently sits on the board of Cincinnati Public Radio and was chair of the American Bar Association's Forum on Communications Law from 2018-20.