

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Another Shot: Cantwell Sets Hearing on Spectrum, ACP Bill

Senate Commerce Chair *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) is trying once again to get legislation addressing concerns about America's spectrum pipeline and the future of the Affordable Connectivity Program out of committee.

She scheduled a hearing for June 12 at 10am to vote on the Spectrum and National Security Act of 2024, a bill that would restore the FCC's spectrum auction authority and extend it for five years while also proposing using \$7 billion in spectrum auction proceeds to revive ACP. It would also use those same proceeds to fund a \$3 billion shortfall for the Rip and Replace program and direct NTIA and spectrum-using federal agencies to conduct feasibility assessments to find unused bands and open them up to all users.

The bill has faced an uphill battle to approval already with Republicans requesting a number of amendments with many of them targeted at disagreements over FCC decisions and disputes over the best way to proceed with spectrum policy to satisfy federal users as well as commercial users.

New Street Research is of the mind that Cantwell would not schedule the vote if she wasn't confident it wouldn't pass through the committee, but that doesn't mean everything is smooth sailing. Not only is it tough to pass anything substantial and controversial in an election year, but there are no signs there is enough Republican support to overcome a filibuster. There's also Cantwell's mechanism that would allow the FCC to

borrow the initial funds for the continuation of ACP and repay them later through auction revenues.

"We don't see any signs that Speaker Johnson will allow the House to vote on an ACP extension, and of particular note, we think many in his caucus will be troubled by the precedent of allowing the FCC to borrow money to be repaid by auction proceeds," New Street Research said in a note to clients.

FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr* also offered his two cents on the legislation during a press conference following the agency's open meeting Thursday, and he's skeptical at best about whether the bill would actually address real concerns about the U.S. spectrum pipeline.

"I think to the extent that this legislation largely aligns with the Biden Administration's approach on spectrum, I don't think it's going to get us back to moving on spectrum with the same pace and cadence that we had been and that, frankly, we need to," Carr said. "We need to start clearing more spectrum including high power, licensed, exclusive use. That's the type of spectrum that people are building a lot of investments on top of."

He also said there are plenty of other policy reasons why it makes sense to get back to quickly clearing spectrum, including the scheduling of auctions that will produce revenue for the Treasury that could be directed to paying down the national debt.

"It's not clear to me that this particular spectrum bill that's being marked up gets the job done in terms of these policy areas," Carr said. But at the same time, he is still of the mind that the FCC has some authority to license specific spectrum



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bands even as it lacks its spectrum auction authority. He would like to see movement at the agency on specific swaths of spectrum to begin building up that pipeline once again. “Not only do we not have auction authority, which you can say is a problem, but we’re falling behind even in places where we do still have auction authority,” he added.

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ISPS, NY FINALIZING LOW-COST BROADBAND AGREEMENT

Those anxiously waiting to see what sort of agreement ISPs have hashed out with New York State regarding its affordable broadband law are going to have to wait a little longer. On Thursday, the groups representing ISPs asked the court for more time to file a petition for rehearing their objections to the 2021 New York Affordable Broadband Act. The court had previously agreed to an extension until June 7. Now, the groups, which include **USTelecom** and **ACA Connects**, are asking that the deadline be extended to June 14. Per court documents, the associations and New York State AG anticipate reaching an agreed-to stipulation that would obviate the need for the appellees to file a rehearing petition before the court. That’s still the case. “While the parties had expected to reach final agreement as to that agreed-to stipulation on or before June 7, 2024—the current date by which Plaintiffs-Appellees must file any petition for rehearing or rehearing en banc—the parties have found need for a short, additional extension of time to obtain all necessary approvals,” said Thursday’s motion, which NY AG is not opposed to. The New York law requires ISPs to offer a \$15/month 25 Mbps internet service plan or \$20/200 Mbps plan. The ISP associations sued and a lower court issued a permanent injunction on the law. But in April a Second Circuit panel said the ISPs’ arguments failed because the law does not establish a framework of rate regulation that is comprehensive enough to imply Congress meant to exclude states from taking action.

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NTIA SURVEY SHOWS PROGRESS IN INTERNET USAGE

NTIA provided an update on its Internet for All initiative with the latest edition of the Internet Use Survey, showing 13 million more people used the internet in the U.S. in 2023 compared to 2021. Eighty-three percent of people aged 3 and older used the internet in some way in 2023, up from 80% in 2021, which is the largest increase since the 2015-17 timeframe. Internet adoption among lower-income households (less than \$25,000 per year) increased by 4% from 2021 to 73% in 2023. Approximately 72% of people lived in households that had both fixed and mobile internet connections, and 12% of people lived in households without any internet

connection—a 2% drop compared to 2021. There’s still plenty of work to be done though. NTIA’s survey, which was fielded in November, showed only 54% of those in households making less than \$25,000 per year had both fixed and mobile connections compared to 80% of people in households making \$100,000 or more having both. Around 62% of Black Americans used a desktop, laptop or tablet in 2023, with American Indians and Alaska Natives recording 57% and Hispanics coming in at 54% for that usage category. The Asian demographic was 71% while White non-Hispanics had 72% who used a desktop, laptop or tablet.

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GENERATIVE AI SOFTWARE PRIMED FOR RAPID GROWTH

Artificial intelligence is only growing, and it’s only the beginning. **S&P Global Market Intelligence’s 451 Research** released a Generative AI Market Monitor report that showed the software portion of the generative AI market is expected to reach \$52.2 billion by 2028. That’s a compound annual growth rate of 58% from 2023, and is a result of advancements in AI models that can create new content such as images, code and text. It’s also a significant spike from previous market revenue predictions with the 2028 forecast moving from \$36 billion to the \$52.2 billion mark between the June 2023 and March 2024 publications. North America is the leader in the generative AI market as 64% of revenue last year went to AI companies based in the region. That could change with high growth rates recorded in other regions including Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa.

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COMCAST ADVERTISING WORKING WITH TRANSUNION

Comcast Advertising is teaming up with the global insights company **TransUnion** in a privacy-forward collaboration. The two will work to enable audiences within Comcast’s footprint to be matched to information within TransUnion’s identity graph to create custom, advanced audience segments for addressable advertising campaigns on Comcast’s TV platforms. Comcast’s audience data will be matched with TransUnion’s identity assets, which then makes audience segments that offer an actionable profile of ideal customers.

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CISCO GOING DEEPER ON AI

Cisco’s global venture investment arm has launched a \$1 billion AI investment fund aimed at bolstering the startup ecosystem and expanding the development of secure and reliable AI solutions. **Cisco Investments** has already committed nearly \$200 million of the money and is making strategic

investments in **Cohere**, **Mistral AI** and **Scale AI** among others to advance customers' AI readiness and complement Cisco's AI innovation strategy. This move fits with the more than 20 AI-focused acquisitions and investments Cisco has made in recent years, including March's \$28 billion purchase of **Splunk**.

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RATINGS

The inaugural season of the **XFL-USFL** combo **United Football League** is in the books. Total reach of games across **ESPN**, **ESPN2**, **ESPN Deportes** and **ABC** came in at 36.1 million viewers over 80 total games. Viewership from those networks was up 31% compared to the 2023 full regular-season average for the XFL and USFL on linear platforms. The top local markets were Birmingham, St. Louis and Oklahoma City. The most-watched game came May 25 on ABC, with the Stallions vs Brahmas reeling in 1.1 million viewers.

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DOING GOOD

Charter is pledging \$1 million to Spectrum Digital Education this year. The funding will be used to award grants to nonprofits that work to offer access to tools, resources and education about connectivity within the Spectrum footprint. The application window for nonprofits will be open until June 26 at 5pm.

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PROGRAMMING

"The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon – The Book of Carol" will debut its second season Sept. 29 at 9pm on **AMC** and **AMC+**. Season 2 will have six episodes. – **ESPN** and **Mark Messier** agreed to a multi-year contract extension to keep the Hockey Hall of Famer on the network's **NHL** coverage. – Sharkfest is upon us, and **National Geographic** is kicking it off with "Shark Beach with Anthony Mackie: Gulf Coast" at 9pm and "Shark vs. Ross Edgley" at 10pm. – The 100th season of "The Real Housewives" franchise is set to begin July 11 at 9pm with "The Real Housewives of Orange County." **Bravo** will have it before episodes are available to stream the next day on **Peacock**.

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PEOPLE

Paramount Advertising is promoting **Travis Scoles** to EVP, Advanced Advertising. He'll remain the head of the ad targeting platform Vantage and oversee other internal data optimization and analysis products and efforts in currency and measurement innovation. Scoles—who also serves as the Chair of the U.S. Joint Industry Committee Board and is a Product Council Member for OpenAP—first joined Paramount in 2020. – **Kristen Jenkins** is the new CFO of **Great American Media**. Jenkins comes from **GTT Communications** where she was SVP, Financial Planning & Analysis. Other stops along her 30-year career include **NBCUniversal**, **ViacomCBS** and **AOL**.

What We're Listening to

Seems fitting that the Nicest Guy in Cable would end up on a [podcast](#) called "R.O.G. Return on Generosity." If you've been feeling Rob Stoddard's absence since he retired from NCTA in January 2022, this interview might just be what you need to ease that void.



Host Shannon Cassidy, founder/CEO of Bridge Between and a frequent WICT Network presenter on executive coaching and professional development, leads an interesting discussion that takes us from Stoddard's childhood (did you know he used to play ball in the backyards of MLB pitchers Curt Simmons and Robin Roberts?) to career highlights, including the analog-to-digital television transition.

Along the way, Stoddard reflects on the impact mentoring others has had on him. "I was introduced to the most amazing world of diversity and multi-ethnicity that I didn't expect. Through [The WICT Network and NAMIC], I was able to be introduced to a wide variety of individuals that have intensely different backgrounds. And by forming the bonds with them that I did, I found myself to be immensely better educated in the worlds from which they came," he said. "It was only because of their openness, their willingness to share their life stories with me, the opportunity to engage with them in the places they lived and worked. Of all the things I've done in my life, that probably gave me the most well-rounded view of American society and the world at large. That was an amazing return for me and something that keeps giving to this day."

Stoddard's career began as a news assistant at the Washington, DC, bureau of ABC Radio. He worked for UPI and served as Press Secretary for U.S. Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS). Stoddard was in corporate communications for Continental Cablevision and AT&T Broadband. He capped off his career with a 20-year run at NCTA, retiring in January 2022 as SVP, Industry & Association Affairs.

The interview closes, appropriately for those familiar with Stoddard, with his views on civility. "I think anyone who preaches civility now feels a little bit like a wolf in the wilderness because our society regrettably has degenerated to the point where we seem to act more confrontationally than civilly," he said, acknowledging that his experience is colored by his many years working in D.C. "I strongly believe that the only salvation for American society as a whole for people to begin to behave more civilly...It means compromising your point of view to get to a good result. It means treating people well and treating them with respect even if you disagree with their ideas..." – *Amy Maclean*

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'Queer Planet' Celebrates All Love in Nature

It's Pride Month, and it's not just humans who are prepared to honor this time meant to celebrate love. The animal kingdom is stepping out proudly in Peacock's "Queer Planet," a documentary examining queer behavior in the natural world that arrived on the streamer Thursday. More than 1,500 animal species have been shown to engage in queer behavior, the documentary proclaims, and it goes far beyond gay male penguins in zoos. A tight budget meant that everything about the production was creative. The editorial team was composed of three core members—including Producer/Director Ed Watkins—and he whittled down that species list to include those the crew had the most realistic chance of filming and that would highlight the diversity of the natural world. "Flamingos, penguins, lions are all very charismatic, so they went in, but we also wanted to feature some of the lesser known and loved species like cuttlefish, ants and slugs," Watkins said. The goal when he pitched and developed the film was always to put to bed misconceptions that surround sexuality in nature and to shine a light on either untold or deliberately ignored stories. The initial trailer for the documentary received backlash from conservative groups and others that are not supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. But Watkins doesn't believe Queer Planet takes an accusatory tone against those that have questions or even negative beliefs around the LGBTQ+ community. Instead, it aims to share fun, remarkable and real stories from the natural world to show that there is no one correct way of being and that all creatures are equally valid and valuable in their journeys. "Importantly, despite the press our trailer received, nothing in the documentary is confrontational—it is based in fact and unrelentingly upbeat and positive. It is a funny documentary about incredible, wonderful things," he said. "I believe the best way to change people's perceptions and make an impact is to show them the real world as it is—full of beauty and diversity—and hopefully they'll see it too." – Sara Winegardner

REVIEWS

"Eric," Netflix. A frequent knock on artistic products, including books, essays, TV shows and films, is that they could have made their points in less time. The criticism is applicable to this intriguing new Netflix series, which features Benedict Cumberbatch's Emmy-worthy performance as Vincent, a troubled yet gifted puppeteer in 1980s NYC. Yet the criticism isn't so much that the 6-part miniseries would have been even better as a 4- or 5-parter, though it would have. Instead, a major complaint is that "Eric," the creation of BAFTA and Emmy winner *Abi Morgan*, includes too many story elements and, unfortunately, leaves several of them incomplete despite the series' length. What's more each of Eric's many stories are compellingly told. First, there's Vincent's dilemma, which includes a successful TV career, but also marital infidelity, alcohol and drug issues, problems with his ultra-wealthy, maladjusted parents, and his self-centered attempts at parenting. His 9-year-old son goes missing, a huge story on its own. However, the series also explores the life, professional and personal, of the NYPD detective, Lt. Ledroit, who gets the case (a terrific *McKinley Belcher III*). Again, a huge story. Yet, it must compete with another missing person's case, racism, poverty, NYC politics and repressed sexuality, among several other elements. On top of this, there's Eric, a puppet that bugs Vince constantly (you'll see). - Seth Arenstein

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (05/27/24-06/02/24)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
TNT	0.800	2523
FNC	0.661	2085
ESPN	0.570	1796
MSNBC	0.471	1486
HALL	0.229	721
HGTV	0.217	683
CNN	0.195	616
INSP	0.195	615
TBSC	0.190	598
USA	0.152	478
HIST	0.146	460
FOOD	0.146	459
TLC	0.130	408
DISC	0.128	403
ID	0.126	396
LIFE	0.125	393
TVLAND	0.123	386
ESPN2	0.121	381
GSN	0.121	380
BRAVO	0.117	368
FX	0.111	349
AMC	0.102	322
A&E	0.100	315
REELZ	0.097	306
WETV	0.095	299
BET	0.089	280
HALLMYS	0.087	276
PRMNT	0.084	265
SYFY	0.082	259
OXY	0.081	254
ADSM	0.073	229
NWSMX	0.072	228
FRFM	0.070	221
NATGEO	0.069	219
TRAVEL	0.067	210

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

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