

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Going for Four: Cantwell's Spectrum Bill Gets Some Key Support

Yes, today's scheduled markup of **Senate Commerce** Chair *Maria Cantwell's* spectrum bill was canceled again at the last minute. But this third cancellation comes with a bit more hope that a fourth markup attempt will actually take place next Tuesday.

The big news is that the **Department of Commerce, Department of Defense** and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have expressed support for Cantwell's legislation subject to a set of agreed upon changes. Previously, it didn't appear that Cantwell had buy in from Defense or Commerce for her bill that would return the FCC's auction authority and require the agency to auction the upper 12 GHz band within three years. It also would have NTIA establish national testbeds for dynamic spectrum sharing.

The changes being worked on by Commerce, Defense and the Joint Chiefs include defining dynamic spectrum sharing in a way that reflects the joint understanding the entities have for the technology as well as making it clear how federal entities will collaborate to establish the spectrum sharing testbed. Other changes in the agreement include technical edits and refining the terms for collaboration on spectrum studies called for by the bill or in the future, including how reports on those studies will be submitted to the President.

"A collaborative compromise between the Department of Defense, Commerce Department, and the Joint Chiefs on spectrum use and reauthorizing the FCC's spectrum auction

authority would represent a major opportunity to make more dynamically shared spectrum available for commercial use while preserving DoD and incumbent federal agency services," said *Tamara Smith*, spokesperson for **Spectrum for the Future**, a coalition that includes **NCTA, Charter, Comcast, Cox, WISPA** and **Public Knowledge**. "Balanced spectrum sharing is critical for our future national security and affords the U.S. a global advantage and the ability to supercharge competitive mobile services, intelligent manufacturing, healthcare and educational uses, while delivering better capacity and connectivity for a wide range of users. We look forward to reviewing the reported proposal with these priorities in mind."

While the cable industry is a big proponent of spectrum sharing, the wireless sector is less enthused over the prospect. CTIA has thrown its support behind Senators *Ted Cruz* (R-TX) and *John Thune* (R-SD)'s Spectrum Pipeline bill, expressing concern that Cantwell's legislation omits mid-band spectrum and focuses too much on dynamic spectrum sharing. The Cruz-Thune measure would require NTIA to identify an aggressive target of at least 2,500 MHz of midband spectrum that could be reallocated from federal use to non-federal or shared use in the next five years, including at least 1,250 MHz in the next two years.

"America continues to fall behind China and other countries in making more spectrum available to meet 5G demand, fuel innovation across industries, and support our nation's economic competitiveness. Any successful

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spectrum legislation must address this challenge with a pipeline of spectrum, just as every multi-year extension has done since the first auction, thirty years ago,” CTIA President/CEO *Meredith Attwell Baker* said in a statement Wednesday. “Failure to do so further risks America’s 5G leadership which is critical to our economic and national security. We look forward to working with Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz on this critical issue.”

Industry watchers seem doubtful Cruz would get behind Cantwell’s Spectrum and National Security Act of 2024, but Thune may be more willing to broker a deal. Cantwell’s bill also proposes using \$7 billion in spectrum auction proceeds to reinstate the Affordable Connectivity Program subsidies for broadband for low-income households. Whether that makes it out of markup remains to be seen, but it could be a strong negotiating point with members on both sides of the aisle in support of re-funding ACP. However, Cantwell’s bill is mainly about spectrum reform, with **New Street Research** viewing the ACP refunding bill introduced by Senators *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) and *JD Vance* (R-OH) as the effort most likely to gain traction, given that includes reforms such as eliminating the alternate verifier for eligibility and nixing eligibility through the USDA’s Community Eligibility Program. “Still, the odds of any effort at an ACP extension are low and getting lower,” New Street analyst *Blair Levin* wrote in a note Monday.

Speaking of ACP, we noticed a **Benton Institute** [blog post](#) this week that pointed out how six of the ISPs highlighted in 2022 by the White House for committing to providing low-cost broadband plans of \$30 or less for ACP enrollees weren’t included in its recent announcement touting 14 ISPs for continuing to offer plans at \$30 or less through 2024. That doesn’t necessarily mean they aren’t offering low-cost plans. **Breezeline**, which is among the six, told CFX customers enrolled in ACP will be eligible to receive its 50 Mbps Internet Assist offering at \$9.99/month with the modem rental included in that fee. Other income-eligible households not currently enrolled in ACP may also qualify for the reduced-cost service. Breezeline is also offering a 100 Mbps product for \$29.99/month if customers sign up by the end of July.

Another ISP on the list, **WOW!**, said it remains committed to offering access to low-cost plans. “Our ACP customers will now have the option to keep their current plan at the standard rate or update their account to a plan and pricing that works better for them. Our new simplified pricing plan starts at \$30 per month and includes fast Internet connectivity, WiFi modem, no annual contracts, no data caps, and no hidden fees. In some areas, customers can lock in their Internet price for an additional \$5/month with our Price Lock Promise,” a rep said.

## The **WHO** and the **WHY**

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



**TRAVIS**  
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PARAMOUNT ADVERTISING

### 3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Paramount is continuing to put its faith in Travis, elevating him to the EVP level last week. He’ll remain in charge of Paramount’s ad-targeting product Vantage, and will also assist in sales, operations, data science and engineering as well as efforts pertaining to convergent optimization, identity, new currency and measurement advancement.
- Travis first joined Paramount in 2020 when it was still under the ViacomCBS moniker. He’s built Vantage up over the last four years, assembling a team that’s carried forth the short- and long-term goals for Paramount Advertising. “In addition to Vantage, Travis has led our broader approach to data- and audience-based advertising by building a best-in-class global advanced advertising team spanning Sales, Product Management, and Data Science. Travis and team have also built key internal capabilities around multi-currency research, forecasting for pricing and stewardship, convergent frequency management, and linear addressable reporting,” Paramount Advertising President John Halley said in a memo.
- When he’s not in the office or riding his motorcycle, Travis sits as the Chair of the U.S. Joint Industry Committee board and is a Product Council Member for OpenAP. He also played football during his days at Amherst College, where he received a degree in Economics.

## PARAMOUNT CEOS ADDRESS FAILED SKYDANCE DEAL IN MEMO

It hasn’t exactly been calm waters for **Paramount** as of late, but its CEO trio is looking to steady the ship. **CBS** President/CEO *George Cheeks*, Paramount Pictures and **Nickelodeon** President/CEO *Brian Robbins* and **Showtime & MTV** Entertainment Studios President/CEO *Chris McCarthy* penned a letter to employees Wednesday after its deal to merge with **Skydance Media** [collapsed](#) near the finish line. “So, what does this mean for Paramount? While the Board will always remain open to exploring strategic alternatives that create value for shareholders, we continue to focus on executing the strategic plan we unveiled last week during the Annual Shareholder Meeting, which we are confident will set the stage for growth for Paramount,” the memo reads, reiterating the company’s [three-pronged plan](#) of transforming its streaming strategy, streamlining the organization and optimizing its asset mix. “Importantly, we want to thank

you for your hard work and your continued focus. We recognize that the last several months have not been easy as we manage through ongoing change and speculation. And, we should all expect some of this to undoubtedly continue as the media industry and our business continue to evolve.”

## BOOZMAN PROPOSES KEEPING RECONNECT THROUGH FARM BILL

Sen John Boozman (R-AR) released a Farm Bill framework drafted by Senate Republicans Tuesday, and it takes important steps aimed at bringing more broadband to rural Americans. Among a plethora of other proposals, the bill makes the **USDA's** ReConnect Program permanent and further funnels funding to ensure it goes to communities most in need of connectivity. It also looks to improve coordination among states and federal agencies charged with managing broadband deployment programs to prevent overbuilding. “As Congress considers renewing the Farm Bill, it is critical that the USDA's rural broadband program focus on closing the digital divide in communities lacking broadband and avoid grants to areas where service already exists,” **NCTA** said in a statement supporting the framework. “Closing the digital divide is possible, but only if we remain focused in dedicating scarce resources to fill in broadband gaps.”

## ROKU EXPANDS AD ACCESS TO ROKU MEDIA

**Roku** is introducing a TV streaming-first advertising technology solution that combines ad inventory with advertiser demand. Dubbed Roku Exchange, it creates a connection between premium ad inventory and a programmatic ecosystem while combining advertising supply with identity data and AI-powered optimization capabilities. That'll allow for the process of buying Roku Media and TV streaming ad placements to be accessible to more buyers. Roku Exchange also offers content signals from the Roku Channel and other streaming platforms, audience-based ad decisioning on Roku Media ad placements and AI optimization to help with engagement through personalized ad breaks and campaigns.

## AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC**, **NTIA** and the Department of the Navy have collaborated on changes to the interference model used in the 3.5 GHz band to allow CBRS uninterrupted access to midband spectrum. When CBRS rules were established in 2015, dynamic protection areas were established along coastlines and around federal facilities to protect federal users. The size of those areas may now be reduced, authorizing service to approximately 72 million more people and expanding the unencumbered CBRS area to roughly 240 million people nationwide. The changes will be made after Spectrum Access System administrators conduct proper testing that demonstrates their ongoing ability to effectively manage dynamic use of the spectrum.

## CARRIAGE

**DirectTV** and **DirectTV Stream** are adding a couple more channels [after tacking on](#) **Somos Novelas** and **El Rey Rebel** on Tuesday. Coming to DirectTV is the **Women's Sports Network**, **Racing America** and **Poker Go**. WSN is the first streaming network dedicated to women's sports and comes with original programming, live games and a daily studio show “Game On.” Racing America showcases short-track racing and has **NASCAR** Cup Team content, and Poker Go boasts a collection of poker tournaments, shows and more.

## FIBER FRENZY

**TDS** launched its network in another community in Washington County, Utah. The provider is now reaching 3,700 service addresses in the town of Ivins, Utah, offering speeds of up to 8 Gbps as well as TDS' digital TV service TDS TV and phone options.

## DIRECTV DAY CELEBRATES PROVIDER'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Monday marks **DirectTV's** 30th birthday, with the provider celebrating the milestone with a month full of philanthropic service. Dubbed “DirecTV Day” internally, the day marks the sale of the first DirecTV system in Jackson, Mississippi, on June 17, 1994. DirecTV employees are set to participate in more than 30 volunteer events and 100 activations across the country. Those include prepping meals for the Ronald McDonald House Charities, putting together care packages for the unhoused community and celebrations with food trucks, barbecues, fundraisers and more across the country.

## RATINGS

**COMBATE Global's** first-ever COMBATE Female MMA event Saturday drew 639,000 viewers P2+ on **Univision** and **Fuse**, also reeling in 277,000 viewers A18-49. That beat the Top Rank boxing match happening in the same time frame Saturday on **ESPN**, which had 572,000 viewers P2+ and 170,000 A18-49. It also outdrew other sporting events including the U.S. vs Colombia men's soccer match that same day at 5:30pm on **TNT**. Colombia's 5-1 win drew 611,000 viewers P2+ and 275,000 A18-49.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Nominations for **Cablefax's** Diversity and Pride List are open, with the best pricing in place through Friday. Each year, **Cablefax: The Magazine** recognizes influential executives for their significant impact and dedication to promoting diversity within the industry. New this year, A Celebration of Work Culture in 2024 & Beyond. We're looking to celebrate the innovative employers who are at the forefront of building modern and forward-thinking work environments that foster collaboration, excitement, and profit. Nominate today at [CablefaxDiversity.com](http://CablefaxDiversity.com).



# Think about that for a minute...

## All In The Family

Commentary by Steve Effros

AI is no longer an infant. The panic which started a little over a year and a half ago when the company “OpenAI” unleashed “ChatGPT” on the world is finally starting to wane. The “chatbot” infant is now starting to grow up, but it’s important to understand that it’s still just shy of being a two-year-old! Don’t expect too much, too soon.

When all the headlines started screaming about “artificial intelligence” and we were warned that computers would quickly become “smarter” than humans, I tried to point out that “AI” is simply the natural development of a tool. It can be used for good things or bad (think of a chain saw). It’s not “intelligent,” although it is very clever. We’re not quite sure why a Large Language Model, which simply puts “tokens” together, figuring out what word most appropriately follows the word before it, comes out with some of its responses. Thus the concerns.

The power of AI, (Apple just indicated it’s going to try to co-opt the term by calling it “Apple Intelligence” in their devices) derives from the massive amount of data being processed. It comes up with “conversational” responses and the generation of videos, pictures, music etc., from written prompts. It’s all very exciting. But folks are finally starting to appreciate that an infant has to learn to walk before it can run! Ironically, some are already suggesting that “AI” has “failed” at producing its “promised” miracles. Silly. The ability to digest massive amounts of data, such as scanning for potential new, life-saving drugs, has already proved its value.

One obvious problem, however, has to do with confusion over what we’re calling these newfound computational abilities. Google became successful as a “search” engine because it uses the internet as a database and delivers relevant website locations to you based on your inquiry. Ask for “sale of used cars near me” and it will deliver a score of web locations you can explore yourself to decide if they offer what you need. It works very well. Billions of folks make inquiries and each one gets bombarded with advertising inserted by Google. Thus it has one of the highest corporate valuations in the world. But until the

“ChatBot” race started in November 2022, Google, while doing research on providing “conversational answers” to questions, had not released anything publicly. OpenAI opened Pandora’s box, and everyone else had to quickly follow or be left behind.

While the ChatGPT model has been instrumental in getting folks to “ask questions” or “give instructions” that can then generate either conversational responses or pictures, what it says or creates has sometimes been less than useful.

Now comes Perplexity.ai. I strongly recommend you try it out. There are free apps or you can jump right into a subscription and get the high-octane version. Either way, it’s impressive. This is neither a first-generation competitive “search engine” nor is it designed, at least so far, to be a “generator” of things like instruction-based art. It’s an “answer engine.”

You can pose complex questions and it will provide an “answer” based on reviewing not billions of word positions, but actual text from sources it then cites as it generates a synthesized “response” to your question. We’ll get to the copyright issues later. So far, the answers I’ve gotten have been both precise and well documented. I was able to “focus” the response only on specific sources, or types of data. It’s worth your time.

The importance of Perplexity is that it teaches us that “AI” is a whole host of different things. I still use Google for some types of “search” and Perplexity for others. That’s the point.

“AI” isn’t just one thing, it’s not just one infant, it’s a whole family!



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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