

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Now What? A Lot Can Happen (and has) Between Now and November

America has had more than 24 hours now to digest the news that *Joe Biden* is no longer running for president, but the list of questions over what happens next keeps growing.

On the advertising front, political buys happen on a weekly basis that runs Tuesday to Monday (since Election Day is on a Tuesday). Therefore, Sunday's announcement around 2pm didn't create mass cancellations. And while the news was stunning, it wasn't completely unexpected. Anticipating such a move could be in the works, affiliates had already told **Ampersand** that they'd be available to pull down ads as necessary. Similarly, **Comcast's** ad arm **Effectv** and other firms had teams standing by to pull ads down or make changes to copy as needed.

With *Kamala Harris* picking up a number of endorsements for the race and Biden's campaign coffer already being transferred to her, when might we see Harris TV ads start to appear? "I think there are a lot of things you have to do before you see a TV ad, but I wouldn't be surprised if you could see outside groups supporting her before she got all those questions answered. And then some ads coming from her, my guess is August but it could be sooner," Ampersand's VP, Political Strategy *Tim Kay* told **CFX**.

Effectv's VP, Political Sales *Chris Vail* warned the creative could be a bit tricky before a nominee is officially declared. "PAC money could continue to run messaging that is either

looking at Trump's record or looking at Biden's record," he said. "It really kind of depends on where they believe the message should fit until they have a nominee. I think that's the big challenge—going out with Harris's as running for president and being the Democratic nominee is tough until she actually has a nomination."

New blood for the Democrats could also reinvigorate some races down ballot. "The challenge again here is while they've gotten to a point where they're not worried about a flagging presidential campaign dragging them down, I think the creative strategy is still going to be something they're going to have to look at," said Vail. "With the Trump attack happening and a lot of strategy attacking Trump, that might have meant a lot of these campaigns needed to pivot their strategy. It'll be interesting to see how they approach that once there's a new person at the top of the ticket for the Dems and whether or not they're going to be able to still kind of go after Trump the way they had before."

Regardless of what's ahead, cable's hoping to play a major role. Ampersand, owned by **Charter**, **Comcast** and **Cox**, will be stressing its reach of 116M multiscreen households and over 75% of addressable households in the U.S. That's digital and linear addressable. And while streaming gets a lot of attention—there are limits there. Kay pointed to the recently released June **Nielsen** Gauge report which showed time spent streaming for those 2+ soared to 40.3%. "I wish the largest voting block wasn't 35+, but it is, and until that



NOMINATE NOW

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changes campaigns need to target that group. Streaming is an essential part of a campaign, but it's not as strong as the Gauge makes it seem," he said in a LinkedIn post last week that recast the Gauge data for the 35+ demo in Milwaukee, home of the RNC. Under those parameters, cable accounted for 37% of viewership in Milwaukee (35% nationally), while broadcast has 32% and ad-supported streaming falls to 12%.

"I think it's like 38% of the overall impressions available now are on streaming. However, when you cut that down to what's available for political advertisers, it's only 25% of the available impressions. So, there's still a huge need for live linear television, particularly on breaking news," added Vail. "When you have a new candidate coming in that's going to need as much reach as possible, that changes the math a little bit. Even if all the reach is now going to CTV across all platforms, they're not going to be able to reach all those people on all streaming platforms. I think there's going to be a need for them to continue to fundraise and make sure they're hitting where the voters are. As Effectv and other MVPDs have [launched] addressable offerings, they can bring their own data of who they need to reach, but they can also match that against the household in a privacy centric way. That becomes a huge, huge piece for us." Particularly if Harris brings in new audiences that the campaign wants to emphasize, such as younger voters, people of color, etc.

When it comes to the policy implications, if Harris is the nominee, **New Street Research's Blair Levin** expects her to have a similar tech and telecom policy as Biden. That would mean many current office holders would stay in place, and those who did leave would be replaced by folks of a similar mindset. She's been a vocal proponent of the need for broadband for all and has backed the Affordable Connectivity Program. In a note to clients, Levin noted that some expect her to be friendlier to tech than the Biden administration based on her time as California's AG and senator.

"We are not sure how predictive her views from that time are, as the facts and politics about tech have changed dramatically since then. Certainly, no one familiar with Biden's pre-presidential record on anti-trust, for example, would have seen the Kanter/Khan direction as likely. Here, we see initial continuity from Biden to Harris but potential for change down the road," he wrote.

TNT SPORTS, WBD MATCH NBA RIGHTS OFFER

After weeks of speculation regarding whether **Warner Bros. Discovery** and **TNT Sports** would find a way to remain a media partner of the **NBA**, TNT Sports said Monday it's matched one

of the league's agreed media rights offers with **Disney, Amazon** and **NBC**. TNT Sports didn't specify which agreement it's matching, but reports have pointed to Amazon/**Prime Video's** streaming-only package as the one TNT Sports would target. "Regrettably, the league notified us of its intention to accept other offers for the games in our current rights package, leaving us to proceed under the matching rights provision, which is an integral part of our current agreement and the rights we have paid for under it," TNT Sports said in a statement. "Our matching paperwork was submitted to the league today. We look forward to the NBA executing our new contract." It was revealed over the weekend that TNT Sports' deadline to match any new rights agreement part of the NBA's imminent media package was Monday. Amazon's deal is reportedly worth \$1.95 billion per year, but the wrench in that is a potential poison pill that would favor Amazon to remain included in the NBA's new media rights package. *The Ringer's Bill Simmons* said during a [podcast](#) appearance that Amazon's agreement includes guaranteed, multiple years' worth of money upfront.

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VERIZON STEADY ON FWA, BUT C-BAND BENEFITS QUESTIONABLE

The highlight of **Verizon's** earnings report continues to be its broadband additions, and its growth in fixed wireless continues to be steady. The provider recorded total broadband net additions of 391,000 in 2Q24, with total fixed wireless net additions coming in at 378,000. Verizon now serves more than 3.8 million subscribers with fixed wireless. Overall Fios internet adds came in at 28,000 in the quarter, which was something of a pleasant surprise to leadership after the shutdown of the Affordable Connectivity Program. "In the second quarter, we saw about 400,000 prepaid disconnects. This is the vast majority of what we expected, and there's minimal impact on the postpaid side," Verizon CFO *Tony Skiadas* said on the company's 2Q24 earnings call. "We saw some pressure on Fios in terms of gross add opportunity. If we look ahead in the third quarter, we expect some disconnects in prepaid and a small number of other products." Verizon CEO *Hans Vestberg* said the company is continuing to expand the amount of C-band spectrum it has available in suburban and rural markets, and he's optimistic about that additional capacity unlocking more opportunities for fixed wireless. Others aren't so convinced. "Put simply, C-band isn't very good spectrum," **MoffettNathanson** said in a note to clients. "We suspect that Verizon's C-band problem has held back residential FWA, as well. There, the problem may not be capacity, but instead coverage. There are more holes than cheese in the C-band network." Vestberg refused

to comment on rumors that Verizon is investigating a sale of its tower portfolio, but instead said he and Skiadas are committed to improving the company's overall cash flow and that includes being open to any opportunity to optimize assets. "The focus on cash flow is extremely important because it goes straight into our capital priorities that we've been so focused on for the last couple of years," he said.

FCC RELEASES DEEP DIVE INTO AT&T'S FEBRUARY OUTAGE

The FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau released a report Monday diving into the scale of an AT&T outage on Feb. 22. The outage impacted users in all 50 states; Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. All voice and 5G data services for AT&T wireless customers were down, impacting more than 125 million devices, blocking more than 92 million voice calls and preventing the completion of more than 25,000 calls to 911 call centers. The outage also cut off service to devices on FirstNet, and although AT&T prioritized the restoration of FirstNet services, it did not notify FirstNet customers of the outage until three hours after it began and nearly one hour after service was restored. The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau has referred the matter to the Enforcement Bureau for potential FCC rule violations, and the agency is still investigating AT&T's recently-disclosed breach of consumer data.

OLYMPICS COMING TO ROBLOX

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee joined forces with NBCUniversal to create a first-ever customer experience inside the popular online game Roblox. The promo, called "The Team USA Ultimate Obby," features 20 athletes, video highlights of competitions and special digital items in which athletes will share the sales' proceeds. Other Team USA enhancements include the Peacock Fan Zone where users can watch highlights together or participate in an activity where players go on-air with their own broadcast as well as a Team USA House, Team USA Museum and Shop.

TRACFONE PAYING \$16 MILLION TO SETTLE BREACH INVESTIGATION

Tracfone Wireless is paying \$16 million to settle FCC investigations into whether Tracfone failed to protect its customers' information from unauthorized access in connection with three data breaches. The three breaches happened between Jan. 2021-Jan. 2023 and resulted in the exposure of customers' proprietary information, including their personally identifiable information. In addition, Tracfone has agreed to privacy and security awareness training to employees and certain third parties, a mandated information security program, annual assessments of its information security program and more.

CARRIAGE

Optimum struck a multi-year extension with Gray Media to keep Gray stations available for Optimum TV customers. Optimum has 16 states in its footprint with Gray stations, including Arizona, where Gray struck a deal with the Phoenix Suns and Mercury to carry select games for free on KTVK and KPHE.

FIBER FRENZY

Comcast marked the end of a \$7.5 million project, launching internet in two additional zip codes in Miami-Dade, Florida. Homes and businesses in 33155 and 33143—which spans South Miami, Coral Terrace and West Miami—can now get Xfinity and Comcast Business services.

RNC RATINGS

As if it were a surprise, Fox News solidified itself as the top-rated news network throughout the Republican National Convention. Nielsen reported an estimated 25.38 million viewers watched the fourth and final night of the RNC. Fox News network averaged 8.81 million viewers P2+ in Thursday's prime-time in addition to a leading 1.58 million viewers A25-54. That beat ABC, CBS and NBC in addition to CNN's mark of 1.67 million P2+ and MSNBC's 1.21 million. Viewership reached a high point when former President Donald Trump—who accepted the Republican party's nomination Thursday—delivered a speech, which also served as his first public appearance since his attempted assassination. Fox News averaged 10.42 million viewers P2+ and 2.02 million A25-54 from 10-11pm. CNN followed with 2.2 million (687,999 A25-54) and MSNBC with 1.27 million (159,000 A25-54). For Newsmax, it averaged over 600,000 total viewers during the first two days of the RNC, including 200,000 A35-64, in prime.

PROGRAMMING

Season 2 of BET's courtroom series "Ms. Pat Settles It" will begin July 31 at 10pm. This season's lineup of celebrity guests includes Tamar Braxton, Deray Davis, Ray J and Karlous Miller. – HBO's documentary "Elizabeth Taylor: The Lost Tapes" will premiere Aug. 3 at 8pm. Max will have it to stream.

PEOPLE

Netflix's VP, Global Advertising Sales Peter Naylor is leaving the company. The former NBCUniversal, Hulu and Snap exec first joined the streaming giant in August 2022. Netflix will appoint an ad sales chief overseeing the U.S. and Canada to replace Naylor. – Family Entertainment Television hired Christine Carbia as its VP, National Sales. She'll be based in New York and report to EVP, National Sales Michael DuPont. Carbia has spent nearly 25 years in the advertising industry. Carbia's previous stops include Scripps, Fox and NBCUniversal.