

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

For Their Consideration: Roth Responds to Questioning on BEAD

Senate Commerce hosted the nomination hearing of *Arielle Roth*, up for NTIA Administrator, Thursday, and the gathering, for the most part, centered on her thoughts on BEAD reform.

Senate Commerce Chair *Ted Cruz* (R-TX) kicked off the hearing by asking committee members to be gentle in their questioning given that Roth is due to give birth to her sixth child at any time, and nobody wanted it to occur during the hearing. He joked that if things went awry, they may have to call Sen. *Roger Marshall* (R-KS), an obstetrician, to provide care.

And, to his wishes, the hearing was largely lacking in drama. Roth kept her cards close to her chest for the most part, responding to many questions regarding how she would run the BEAD program with a promise that she would abide by the law. However, she did express a desire to cut out the red tape associated with the program.

"I believe that one of the reasons that the BEAD program has been so slow to roll out is because of excessive bureaucracy imposed by the federal government. I would hope that we could remove some of that red tape to get the program in a position to deploy as quickly as possible," Roth said. "I would certainly want to work with all the state broadband offices to better understand their needs and to ensure that the program is serving the interests of each state and not subjecting them to excessive red tape."

There were limitations to what she could answer in regards to questioning around Commerce Secretary *Howard Lutnick's*

review of the BEAD program, how quickly that would be completed and the results of that investigation. However, she did say she wants to see shovels get into the ground and money flowing to the states as quickly as possible.

"Expediting the program and, specifically, expediting buildout would be my priority if confirmed, and permitting is certainly one thing that I would want to look at as a potential solution to expediting the buildout side," Roth said. "It can also make the deployment of broadband less costly and that's what we want, to get the best bang for the taxpayers' buck so that our dollars are stretched as far as possible so that we can deliver broadband to all Americans in an expeditious and efficient manner."

She held back in responding directly to a question from Sen. *Amy Klobuchar* (D-MN) on whether there should be some degree of spending cap on the BEAD program and, if so, what threshold she would choose to set it at. "I agree that we should be stripping out red tape and bureaucracy of the program to get the program on track and expedited. In terms of a spending cap, I would want to speak with NTIA distinguished career staff to know what, if any, authority has," Roth said.

Senator *Ed Markey* (D-MA) pushed Roth on potential changes to BEAD that could direct focus away from fiber and toward alternative technologies like **Starlink**. To that, Roth said she would administer the law consistent with the statute and to the benefit of the American people, not for any specific individual or company.

"I do believe that Congress wrote the law in a technology-neutral manner, and that means an all-of-the-above solution

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that recognizes different realities across different parts of the country,” she said.

Markey didn’t argue with that, but countered with a note that satellite was never directly prohibited from being a part of the BEAD program, but was not prioritized given the technical limitations of the technology. When he asked her to acknowledge that satellite broadband costs more to service and maintain in the long run than a fiber investment, she said she would want to confer with NTIA career staff before assessing a specific product or technology.

CARR CIPHER ON DEI REPORTEDLY HEADED TO DISNEY

Forget the Dingellgram. Nowadays, companies are anxiously waiting to see if they receive what we’re going to dub the “Carr Cipher”—a missive from **FCC** Chairman *Brendan Carr* that the agency is going to open an investigation into something that’s a bit murky, hence the need for decoding. **Comcast** received one last month, with Carr writing that he wants to ensure its companies aren’t promoting “invidious forms of discrimination.” **Disney** is reportedly set to receive a similar letter, and **Verizon’s** already been sent a Carr Cipher on DEI practices that referenced the agency’s pending review of its **Frontier** acquisition. After Thursday’s FCC meeting, the Chairman was asked what he means by invidious. “Over the years, a lot of times companies have taken sort of routine HR processes that have existed for decades—and that I think are really unobjectionable practices by any measure—and they sort of tucked those into the broader rubric of DEI,” Carr told reporters. “I think at its core the invidious forms of DEI discrimination are when you’re dividing and discriminating people based on race and gender. That’s the core issue that we’re looking at and there may be things that people have, for whatever reason, put under the umbrella of DEI. But at its core, we are looking to root out where people are discriminating based on race and gender.” Democratic Commissioner *Anna Gomez* spoke to reporters after Carr and accused the FCC of weaponizing its regulatory authority to eliminate voluntary efforts by private companies to increase fair and equal employment opportunities. She repeatedly called on the FCC to define what it means by invidious discrimination. “What proof do we have that invidious forms of discrimination even exists? The FCC does not share that. They can’t and they won’t because to the FCC and this administration, to them, it just does not matter,” Gomez said. “They are just excuses. They will go after anyone who dares to speak up and disagree with their extreme partisan agenda.”

SLAUGHTER, BEDOYA ASK COURT TO ALLOW THEM BACK AT FTC

Ousted **FTC** Commissioners *Rebecca Slaughter* and *Alvaro*

Bedoya have officially filed a lawsuit against *President Trump*, **FTC Chair Andrew Ferguson**, **FTC Commissioner Melissa Holyoak** and **FTC Executive Director David Robbins** that alleges that their firings were violations of federal law and Supreme Court precedent. The suit, which was filed in the District Court for the District of Columbia, calls on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Humphrey’s Executor v. United States* to hold that a president cannot remove an **FTC** commissioner without cause. “President Trump’s message did not identify any ‘inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office’ to support Plaintiffs’ removal, as the **FTC** Act requires. Instead, tracking nearly word-for-word President *Roosevelt’s* message to *Humphrey*, President Trump’s message simply asserted: ‘Your continued service on the **FTC** is inconsistent with my Administration’s priorities. Accordingly, I am removing you from office pursuant to my authority under Article II of the Constitution,’” the suit alleges. It asks the court to enter an injunction against the **FTC** defendants ordering that they treat *Slaughter* and *Bedoya* as **FTC** Commissioners, giving them access to their offices, staff, electronic devices and all wages and other benefits of their office. It also asks that the injunction instruct the defendants to take no further action to obstruct the Democratic members of the **FTC** from carrying out their duties. Democratic **FCC** Commissioner *Anna Gomez* noted Thursday that there’s been a lot of speculation on her future at the independent agency. “A bipartisan majority of Congress intended for me to serve the remainder of my term and I plan to do just that. We have seen alarming attempts to remove congressionally appointed members of independent commissions. To me, that is a reflection of this administration’s policy of control and censorship. And it also shows a great amount of fear,” she said. “Silencing dissenting voices by our government is a sign of weakness, not a show of strength. So I will continue to stand firm in my beliefs and speak up in defense of the First Amendment and on behalf of consumers.”

FCC RETIREMENT PARTY

It’s ain’t just *Geoffrey Starks* leaving the **FCC**. Thursday’s Commission meeting ended with a lengthy list of retirements—**CFX** counted roughly 28. Some of the departures had been at the agency for as few as two years while several had decades of experience. The exits include Chairman *Brendan Carr’s* Confidential Assistant *Drema Johnson*, who also served in the role for then-FCC Chair *Bill Kennard* and former Commissioner *Mignon Clyburn*. Also in the retirement round-up were *Bobby Baker*, former Assistant Division Chief of the Policy Division of the Media Bureau, who spent 50 years at the agency, and *Gary Schonman*, who held various roles across the Media Bureau for over 40 years. They aren’t the longest-tenured among the retirees though. That honor goes to

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Larry Olson who has served the Commission for 62 years, primarily in International Affairs. FCC Chairman *Brendan Carr* was asked about the number of departures, which he called a “natural” amount of retirement. He dismissed the notion that the exodus could be a setback in terms of the agency’s intellectual assets, saying the FCC has a tremendous amount of talent and that it’s almost fully completed its return-to-office initiative. “Transitions like this are a natural time when people retire,” Carr said. “We’re still going to be able to deliver results to the American people, and our goal is to do it even more efficiently than ever before.” However, Democratic Commissioner *Anna Gomez* had a different take. “I am very concerned about the brain drain that you are seeing in these retirements and that we will be seeing in the upcoming months because of all the actions of this administration,” she said. “We are losing tremendously talented staff. Yes, we also have very talented staff still with us, but it is going to affect us and our ability to do our jobs, to protect the public interest, to protect consumers and competition and to ensure that new and innovative services get to market for the benefit of our country.” Commissioner *Starks* announced his intent to resign this spring. Appearing remotely at the meeting, he said he had no further news to share, leaving everyone to wonder when exactly he will step down. “I look forward to continuing the work with the Chairman and with my colleagues on the Commission and with the staff in these remaining weeks while I am on the Commission,” he said.

PEACOCK FLIES TO SPECTRUM TV

All customers of *Charter’s* Spectrum TV Select video package can now get **Peacock Premium** at no added cost. The ad-supported option normally goes for \$7.99/month, but the streamer found its way into Charter and **NBCUniversal’s** renewed carriage deal made back in October. Peacock joins **Max**, **Disney+**, **ESPN+**, **Paramount+**, **ViX** and **Tennis Channel** as streaming services that come with Spectrum TV Select.

RACER BUYS, REBRANDS MAVTV

MAVTV is set to get a makeover after being purchased by motorsports media brand **RACER**, giving the California-based company an extra base of operations in MAVTV’s home of Indianapolis. The network will be renamed to **RACER** as part of a rebranding process that’ll unravel progressively over the next few months. However, some branding elements like logos and digital assets

will be rolled out immediately. No changes are expected to be made in terms of staffing or operations, with MAVTV President *CJ Olivares* remaining in his role to oversee the transition.

DIRECTV ADDITIONS

DirecTV is giving some of its skinny bundles a boost. Starting today, **Max Basic with Ads** is part of the MyEntertainment Genre Pack at no added cost. That brings the offering to over 40 entertainment channels along with Max and the **Disney-Hulu** bundle for \$34.99/month. Additionally, DirecTV reached a deal with **Hubbard Media Group** to add **Ovation** to MyEntertainment by mid-next week. DirecTV also revealed it acquired the streaming rights from Spectrum Sports and **MLB** to add **Spectrum SportsNet LA**, **Spectrum SportsNet** as well as the five RSNs owned and operated by the league (Guardians, Twins, Rockies, Diamondbacks and Padres) to the MyHome Team package. The sports-specific offering now includes 22 RSNs or team-specific networks, and the new additions will become available Friday. For the MyNews Genre Pack, it’s set to get **C-SPAN** and **C-SPAN2** next week after the MVPD inked an agreement with the **National Cable Satellite Corp.**

CARRIAGE

It’s not just Opening Day for **MLB** players, but also for the new RSNs that have been waiting to make their regular-season debuts. **Twins.TV** unveiled distribution on **DirecTV** satellite and streaming, **Comcast/Xfinity**, **Charter/Spectrum**, **Midco** and **Fubo**, in addition to several smaller providers including **North Dakota Telephone Company** and **Paul Bunyan Communications**. Twins fans across Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and western Wisconsin can also subscribe to the **Twins.TV DTC** option for \$19.99/month or \$99.99/year. A fellow AL Central rival in Cleveland is introducing a new network this season with **Guardians TV**. It announced carriage across **AT&T U-verse**, **Cox**, **DirecTV**, **Fubo** and **Spectrum** alongside other local providers. The Guardians have a DTC option as well that costs the same rates as **Twins.TV**.

ON THE CIRCUIT

Sponsorships are open for the **SCTE Foundation’s** 2025 Tom Poliss Classic. Set to tee off June 23 from the Waynesborough Country Club in Paoli, PA, the 21st edition of the tournament honors *Tom Poliss*, who led as President during SCTE’s early years. Proceeds will support educational assistance and career development of SCTE members. More info [here](#).

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TVLAND	0.100	318
ID	0.098	312
A&E	0.093	294
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NWSMX	0.091	287
LIFE	0.088	280
HALLMYS	0.084	265
GSN	0.082	261
WETV	0.082	259
AMC	0.079	251
FX	0.079	249
OXY	0.076	242
ESPN2	0.075	239
NAN	0.071	224
REELZ	0.065	205
FRFM	0.053	169
NATGEO	0.053	168
ADSM	0.052	165
BET	0.052	164
TRAVEL	0.050	158
COM	0.050	158
IFC TV	0.048	153
HLN	0.046	146
PRMNT	0.045	144
SNDNCE	0.045	141
MTV	0.044	141
SYFY	0.044	139
NBA	0.043	136
FXX	0.042	134
LMN	0.041	129
NICK	0.039	123
CMT	0.038	120

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