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Dish Network Corp. reported that it lost subscribers in the latest quarter as pressure from blackouts of HBO and Univision has weighed on its base. Shares of the satellite-television provider fell nearly 8% on Wednesday afternoon in response.

Dish said a little more than half of the lost 334,000 subscribers in the fourth quarter stemmed from the HBO and Univision blackouts. Overall in 2018 it lost 920,000 net pay-TV subscribers, ending the year with 12.3 million subscribers. For comparison, the company lost 284,000 pay-TV subscribers in 2017. About 9.9 million of its total subscribers were Dish TV customers, down 1.13 million from a year earlier, while Sling TV subscribers rose 205,000 to 2.4 million. Dish TV had a churn rate of 1.78%, flat from a year ago.

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HBO, along with sister channel Cinemax, has denied access to Dish's subscribers since October due to a continuing spat over the terms of a new distribution agreement. HBO and Cinemax are currently owned by AT&T Inc., which closed its acquisition of Time Warner Inc. in June. AT&T offers HBO and Cinemax programming directly to consumers through the internet or its streaming service, Watch TV. Discussions with AT&T and HBO haven't been meaningful, Dish Chief Executive Officer Erik Carlson said in a call with analysts Wednesday. He added that more defections are likely, especially when "Game of Thrones" returns to air in April. "Some customers do leave us because HBO is a very strong brand and has strong content," said Chairman Charlie Ergen in a call.

He added that others make due by streaming, pirating and going over to friends' places to watch their favorite shows, or just living without it. "The near-term impact of losing programming is pretty short and swift. You make it through the first couple of months; usually people who want to leave, leave. And those who don't, don't care enough or find alternatives," said Richard Greenfield, a media tech analyst at BTIG LLC.

Dish was also struggling to reach a new contract agreement with Spanish language broadcaster Univision Communications Inc., which has kept several of its channels in the dark since June. "We experienced a higher DISH TV churn rate, higher net Pay-TV subscriber losses and lower gross new DISH TV subscriber activations during the third and fourth quarter 2018 and continuing into the first quarter 2019, when Univision and AT&T removed certain of their channels from our DISH TV and Sling TV programming lineup," Dish said in a filing.

Dish has a history of not relenting to networks during contract disputes. It has dropped Fox News, CBS and local TV station owners Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc. and Tribune Media Co. in the past. Dish eventually struck new agreements with them all. Dish's shares had fallen as much as 26% to \$23.98 in the ensuing weeks after HBO cut access, though it has since crawled back, to around \$30 on Wednesday. Dish's stock has fallen 34% in the past 12 months. Revenue from subscribers for the year, which makes up most of Dish's top line, fell by 5.6%. Overall revenue declined by 5% to \$3.31 billion from a year ago, slightly above analysts' expectations of \$3.28 billion. Profit fell 76% to \$337 million, or 64 cents a share, down from a year ago. Analysts polled by Refinitiv were expecting earnings of 67 cents a share. Dish recorded an impairment charge of long-lived assets of \$112 million. – *Wall Street Journal*

Google Inc. is planning to spend \$13 billion this year on data centers and offices across the U.S., Chief Executive Sundar Pichai said Wednesday. In a blog post, Mr. Pichai said the investments would give Google the capacity to hire tens of thousands of employees and create more than 10,000 new construction jobs in Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Virginia. The new investments will give Google, a unit of Alphabet Inc., real-estate assets in 24 states, including data centers in 13 communities, he said.

Mr. Pichai said 2019 will mark the second year in a row that Google will grow faster outside the San Francisco Bay Area than in it. The

company will develop new data centers in Ohio, Nebraska, Texas, and Nevada. Data center expansions are expected in Oklahoma and South Carolina. It will make significant renewable energy investments, Mr. Pichai said. The company would double its workforce in Virginia and Georgia, and new developments are slated for Washington state, California, Massachusetts, Texas, and Maryland, among other states. Over the past year, Google has made over \$9 billion in investments and hired over 10,000 people in the U.S., he said. – ***Wall Street Journal***

The Chicago Cubs and Sinclair Broadcast Group are launching a regional sports network in 2020 that will be the team's exclusive TV home. The Cubs said Wednesday the Marquee Sports Network will carry live game broadcasts and pregame and postgame coverage. Cubs games will be in one place, instead of split between two broadcast stations. The Cubs signed five-year contracts with WGN and WLS in 2014 ahead of plans for the network launch in 2020.

Sinclair president and CEO Chris Ripley [tells the Chicago Tribune](#) negotiations are underway to sign up cable and satellite providers and streaming services for the network. Cubs president of business operations Crane Kenney expressed confidence fans will have many ways to watch, saying the team expects "to have more distribution with the new network than we have today."

At least nine other major league teams or their owners have equity stakes in regional sports networks, including YES (Yankees), NESN (Red Sox), MASN (Orioles, Nationals), NBC Sports Bay Area (Giants), NBC Sports Philadelphia (Phillies), SportsNet New York (Mets), Fox Sports San Diego (Padres) and Spectrum SportsNet LA (Dodgers). In addition, the Toronto Blue Jays are owned by Rogers Communications Inc., the parent company of Sportsnet. – ***Associated Press***

