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Reuters
Facebook campus given all-clear after sarin scare

Washington Post

RCN on Monday stopped carrying the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network, which broadcasts Washington Nationals and Baltimore Orioles games, after the cable company and the regional sports network could not reach a carriage agreement. Effective Monday, RCN customers looking for MASN programming were greeted instead by a message that put the blame for the impasse on the network. “We are unable to

Trump invites conservative tech critics to White House for 'social media summit'

Bloomberg
Google and Facebook Are Sucking the Brains Out of Europe

TVNewsCheck
Op-ed: Defending Sinclair (Somebody's Got To Do It)

The Hill
2020 Democrats accelerate push for action to secure elections

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
No Census outreach funds in PA state budget, despite recommendation

Harrisburg Patriot-News
This spur-wearing senator is hoping to prod Pa. forward through lawmaking that makes a difference

Philadelphia Inquirer
Op-ed: The war against gerrymandering successfully goes on

agree to the terms demanded by MASN," a voice intoned over a graphic of a spinning, green dollar sign.

That will take MASN and its sister station, MASN2, off the channel lineup for the 14,991 homes served by RCN in the D.C. area, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence. That is the fewest homes of the pay TV providers in the Washington designated market area. MASN does not offer a streaming option for viewers. The **deadlocked negotiations** centered, according to people with knowledge of the negotiations, on a concept called penetration minimums. RCN customers can choose between a basic package with broadcast stations such as ABC and Fox and a more comprehensive cable package with networks such as CNN, ESPN and MASN. Deals between networks and providers often call for a minimum percentage of a provider's customers to pay for a network.

With the carriage deal between RCN and MASN up for renewal, those people suggested, RCN wanted to reduce the percentage of its homes that had to subscribe to MASN, while MASN wanted to keep the percentage the same. If MASN had renegotiated with RCN, it would have then been required to renegotiate its percentage minimums with other cable providers in the area. "We would welcome RCN to choose to carry MASN like every other carrier in the seven-state region does," a MASN spokesman said, referring to the network's regional territory.

The stalemate centers on core issues both networks and cable providers face in the age of cord-cutting, as fewer consumers pay for cable television. MASN generates the bulk of its revenue through the fees that cable customers pay their subscribers for their packages — whether they watch MASN or not. RCN, faced with a diminishing subscriber base, would like to offer cheaper, more flexible packages to customers. According to a person with knowledge of the dispute, no continuing negotiations are scheduled. The clash with RCN is the latest drama for MASN, which remains embroiled in a years-long legal dispute between the Nationals and Orioles over how much money the Washington franchise should receive in TV rights fees. **An MLB panel ruled this year that the network owed the Nationals tens of millions of dollars**. The network appealed in New York State Court. – ***Washington Post***

With discussion of big tech regulation all the rage on Capitol Hill, it seems the slow train to government involvement is creeping out of the station. No one expects statues to be enacted anytime soon, nor is there common ground on what regulation would look like, but remember, this is an emotional subject about societal change, huge dollars, massive power and even the odd Russian hacker, so anything could happen. Those in favor of federally mandated rules got a boost last week when Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg again welcomed regulation, saying her company wanted to be an active partner in development. Sandberg thinks the EU is a good model (shudder).

Why should broadcasters care about this? Stations that excel in the future will do so because they transitioned into brand-based businesses based on local news and information. Even with the excitement of ATSC 3.0, most brand extensions will be IP based. True 5G, and eventually 6G, will change the game. Any regulation involving use of the internet by business will eventually affect television stations, particularly any encroachment on the First Amendment. This is a

genuine concern because one of the bubbling issues is who can post what information. The current default gives tech companies control. Allegations of picking winners and losers have helped fuel the call for governmental oversight. No one can foretell what potential statutes might look like, but the EU, which Ms. Sandberg so admires, has never hesitated to regulate speech.

On Capitol Hill, the special interests are already at work. The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, being studied by the House Judiciary Committee, would give newspaper publishers an exemption from antitrust laws so they could negotiate as a group with online platforms. Maybe this is a good idea for the newspapers promoting it, I don't know. But I do know once the government gets involved in news aggregation, other legislation affecting journalism is likely to follow. Whatever regulations are eventually enacted, history tells us they will be complex, expensive to deal with and full of unintended consequences. A few examples from our industry:

- The Prime-Time Access Rule of 1970 was designed to encourage local programming. Instead, it created the modern syndication business.
- The Television/Newspaper/Radio Crossownership Rule of 1975 was designed to create diversity in ownership. Instead, grandfathered operations built massive cultural walls between their newspapers and television stations. The rule, to some extent, and the cultural walls, to their full extent, are still in place.
- The Janet Jackson Super Bowl controversy of 2004 increased indecency fines to $325,000. Anyone who can clearly explain how these fines should be applied, please hold up your hand.

Broadcasters have a strong track record dealing with Congress, the FCC and the FTC, employing the power of local relationships and the tactics of some of the smartest lawyers in town, but they will tell you dealing with both Congress and regulators is never easy, sometimes requiring compromises that make no one happy. The big tech debate will accelerate as we near the 2020 election. Whatever the outcome, the train is on the track. Broadcasters need to take care to not be run over. -- ***TVNewsCheck***

Sling TV is pushing its subscribers toward features like cloud DVR and extra channel add-on packages by rolling out significant discounts as part of a new promotion. The company today announced the Total TV Deal, which allows subscribers to Sling TV Blue, Sling TV Orange or both tack on 50 hours of cloud DVR and seven Sling TV Extras for $20 per month – well below the $45 per month it would cost to add all those options separately.

Subscribers to the base packages would get Sports Extra, Kids Extra, News Extra, Lifestyle Extra, Heartland Extra, Hollywood Extra and Comedy Extra – which include channels like MLB Network, MTV, Nick Jr., BBC World News, Hallmark Channel, Outdoor Channel and Turner Classic Movies. The deal is available to both new and existing Sling TV subscribers.

Sling TV today also changed pricing for Sling TV Orange subscribers who want to add the Sports Extra. That add-on will now cost $10 per month for Orange subscribers – the change puts the package in line with what Blue subscribers were already paying for Sports

Extra. “Since launching Sports Extra as part of our initial offering in 2015, we have added popular channels to the Sports Extra, including MLB Network, NHL Network, NBA TV and more. Our team is working hard every day to keep prices as low as possible, but sports programming fees continue to rise,” wrote Dana McLeod, vice president of programming at Sling TV, in a **blog post**. The pricing change goes into effect right away for new subscribers. Existing subscribers will see the price hike go into effect on Aug. 1.

Both moves today by Sling TV could help bring the service’s average revenue per user closer to the levels of competitors including DirecTV Now, YouTube TV and Hulu with Live TV – all of which charge between $45 and $70 per month for their streaming TV service packages. Sling TV's base packages costs $25 per month each or $40 per month together. – ***Fierce Video***

When the FCC initiated its most recent EEO audits, **we mentioned** that the Commission was planning a rulemaking to review the effectiveness of its EEO rules for broadcasting and multi-channel video operators. The FCC’s **Notice of Proposed Rulemaking** seeking to review these rules has now been released. This review was prompted by complaints raised in connection with the abolition of the FCC Form 397 Mid-Term EEO Report (see our articles **here** and **here**) that the rules were not doing enough to foster minority hiring.

The NPRM raises few specific issues. It instead asks a series of general questions asking for comments on the effectiveness of the Commission’s current EEO program, and what actions the FCC could take to make it more effective. The only specific issue identified in the NPRM as a potential problem area is the concern that the outreach for recruits to fill job openings may be done in some instances after the jobs that are being advertising have already been filled. The NPRM asks whether that is in fact happening and what can be done to prevent such practices. Otherwise, the request is a general one looking for suggestions on how to make the EEO recruitment process more effective. Comments will be due 30 days after the NPRM is published in the Federal Register, with reply comments due 45 days after that publication. – ***Broadcast Law Blog***

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