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Frontier and TDS Telecom agree with COMPTEL and Level 3's recent FCC petition that all service providers should be able to get competitively priced access to local power utility poles to expand their broadband networks.

In June, Level 3 and COMPTEL filed comments asking the FCC to resolve the lingering issue over pole attachment rates for cable and telecom providers. The two groups said that while the FCC's 2011 pole attachment order recognized that there was a disparity in the rate formulas used for cable and telcos that could have "negative implications for competition and broadband deployment," the regulator needs to make further clarifications.

Frontier and TDS Telecom -- two telcos that mainly serve rural markets -- said in separate FCC filings that they support a petition to eliminate any unintended disparities between the cable rate and the new telecom rate for pole attachments. Given its rural status, Frontier said it sees a number of power companies try to overcharge it for access to poles in the areas it serves. "Frontier routinely faces attempts by power companies to use the urban telecom rate cost allocator (66%) for areas with lower numbers of average attaching entities, including for areas with less than an average of three attaching entities -- the presumed average for rural areas," said Frontier in an FCC filing."

Frontier added that since ILECs don't own a lot of their own poles they are "left in an inferior bargaining position." "Because ILECs do not have a right of access to utilities' poles, ILECs face even greater challenges than other attachers achieving just and reasonable rates and are at a competitive disadvantage," said Frontier.

TDS is in a similar position as Frontier. It said in its filing that as a "telecommunications provider that serves many rural areas, TDS Telecom is deeply concerned about this issue." The telco agreed with the joint Level 3 and COMPTEL filing that the FCC could "achieve its goal of providing uniform pole attachment rates for providers of telecommunications and cable service by accommodating cost adjustments scaled to other entity counts when fewer than five entities attach to a pole in an urban area or fewer than three entities attach to a pole in a rural area."

Other telcos like Verizon continue to mire through battles with local utilities over pole access. **Verizon is currently engaged in a pole attachment battle** with Virginia-based power company Dominion, arguing that the power company requires it to pay more for pole access than its CLEC competitors. – ***Fierce Telecom***

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Fears over cord cutting have become overblown, Craig Moffett, an analyst at Moffett Nathanson Research, wrote in a research note.

Six months ago, "the market was oddly complacent; cord-cutting was nowhere in the debate," Mr. Moffett wrote. "No one can make the argument that cord-cutting is now anything but front and center." That's taken a toll on the share prices of cable companies, and has created some buying opportunities, Mr. Moffett said. Specifically, he called for buying two cable stocks: Comcast Corp. and Charter Communications Inc. Both have diverged from rivals and are growing subscribers, revenues and earnings. "It's time, for us at least, to get back in," he wrote. Though he upgraded the cable sector to overweight from neutral, he only has buy ratings on Charter and Comcast.

Over the past six months, Mr. Moffett said that the two largest cable operators have become "materially cheaper relative to the broader market." Charter is up 12.5% this year and Comcast is up nearly 4%, but even those numbers don't give enough credit to the cable operators for their growth, he said. Investors have grown wary of most major media companies in recent weeks after signs of so-called cord cutting emerged during earnings season. Most media companies have inked double-digit drops in their stock prices since they reported earnings. Shares of Time Warner Cable Inc., Discovery Communications Inc., Walt Disney Co., and Twenty-First Century Fox are all down between 10% and 14% this month.

The fall in cable stocks has been less dramatic — Comcast is down nearly 4% this month and Charter is actually up nearly 1% — but Mr. Moffett still says that investors seem to have lumped cable companies alongside other pay-TV companies. The effects of cord cutting on cable companies should be much more muted. And overall, cable companies are performing well.

"Cable isn't just holding its own, it is dramatically improving in video even as the sector has trended down." The potential downside for cable companies from losing subscribers is "relatively limited for now," he said, because these companies have the opportunity to leverage their broadband Internet services to keep customers. Mr. Moffett has a $210 target price on Charter's stock, roughly 11% above where it closed Tuesday. He said that while he expects Charter's deal for Time Warner Cable Inc. to close, but said that his price target wouldn't change all that much for Charter on a standalone basis. His price target for Comcast is $67, roughly 12% above where it's currently trading. – ***Wall Street Journal***

Broadcast political TV advertising will again grow for the 2015-2016 political season, which includes the presidential race. But in years to come, digital platforms will eat into its political advertising share. Borrell Associates estimates that broadcast TV advertising will grow to $8.5 billion for the period July 2015 to November 2016 -- 52% of all political advertising dollars.

Just for 2016 alone, broadcast will see $6 billion in political advertising, up from around the $5.75 billion level in 2012 -- the last presidential election year. But next year and the following years, Borrell expects broadcast TV to be severely impacted, dropping to $2 billion in 2017 and then to just under $4 billion in 2018 -- down from just under $5 billion level in a comparable year, 2014. By the next presidential election in 2020, broadcast is forecast to only hit $5 billion. In that year, Borrell estimates digital platforms will pull in around $3.5 billion.

Borrell says broadcast "will have shed almost 14 share points, while spending is forecast to decrease by 19%. Digital is forecast to absorb that share point loss and more, gaining 16.5 share points during the coming cycle. By 2020, digital political ad spending will have risen to within 30% of broadcast TV levels." Borrell says between July 2015 and November 2016, all political advertising is estimated to be $16.5 billion. This includes all national and local political activity. By the end of this year, Borrell says $5.1 billion will be spent overall on political advertising; and $11.4 billion in 2016.

After broadcast TV, cable TV will get to $1.5 billion -- a 9% share of all political media between July 2015 and November 2016; newspapers will be next at $1.4 billion, a 8.2% share. Borrell says during the period digital political advertising will top the $1 billion mark -- $1.09 billion, representing 6.6% of all political media dollars. Other media: radio, $1.2 billion, 7.2% share; telemarketing $1.07 billion, 6.5% share; and out of home, $831 million, 5.1% share.

National political contests -- including that of the presidential race next year -- will amount to about half of the $16.5 billion to be spent between July 2015 and November 2016. Broadcast TV will account for $5.5 billion with cable TV pulling in $737 million. Spending on digital platforms will go from $1.08 billion next year to $480 million in 2017; to $1.99 billion in 2018; $725 million in 2019. Then in 2020, Borrell expects digital political advertising to sharply rise to $3.3 billion. – ***MediaPost***