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Streaming
Feed Ahead
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complaints
about
Frontier
wane,
though some
still report
problems**

**Los Angeles
Times
Twitter
strikes deal
to live
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**Washington
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names in
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Trump would
be a 'disaster
for
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FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler has decided that the current "good faith" retransmission consent rules are good enough.



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In a blog post Thursday, Wheeler noted that in the STELA Reauthorization Act of 2014, "Congress expressed concern about the harm consumers suffer when negotiations fail and sought-after broadcast programming is blacked out on their pay TV service. STELAR directed the commission to initiate a rulemaking to consider possible revisions to our 'totality of the circumstances' test."

Wheeler said that the review of all the procedures showed that "more rules in this area are not what we need at this point. So, today I announce that we will not proceed at this time to adopt additional rules governing good faith negotiations for retransmission

consent." However, he added: "this does not mean the FCC will turn a blind eye to disputes. Nor does it mean that Congress couldn't expand the scope of the commission's authority in this space."

Wheeler continued: "There is nothing in the record that suggests that our current totality of the circumstances test, which is intentionally broad, is inadequate to address the negotiating practices of broadcast stations or MVPDs in the marketplace today. Though

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Inquirer
Sources:
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flashing-light
perk for
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commenters complained about a variety of negotiating practices, none showed that those practices are the causes of the blackouts that occur. Further, a number of the practices complained of were said to have been engaged in by a single negotiating party or in a small number of negotiations and do not appear to be gaining currency in the marketplace.”

What we need, Wheeler added, "is not more rules, but for both sides in retransmission consent negotiations to take seriously their responsibility to consumers, who expect to watch their preferred broadcast programming without interruption and to receive the subscription TV service for which they pay. "This isn't pie in the sky. Many broadcasters and MVPDs take that responsibility seriously and conclude hundreds of retransmission consent deals without interruption. And this process is entirely invisible to their viewers — as it should be.

Wells Fargo analyst Marci Ryvicker was encouraged by the news: “We view this as a positive for the broadcasters and the diversified O&O (owned and operated) stations. While we understand the FCC is still going to watch retrans negotiations carefully, we do think today's statements remove some uncertainty for these stocks.” And NAB EVP of Communications Dennis Wharton said: "NAB appreciates the significant work undertaken by Chairman Wheeler and the FCC staff to conduct an exhaustive review of the retransmission consent process, and applauds its conclusion that no new rules are needed. As Chairman Wheeler acknowledges, the vast majority of these negotiations are successfully concluded without incident or impasse. Broadcasters remain fully committed to reaching agreements with pay TV companies in good faith so that consumers can continue to receive our high-quality local content whether over the air or through a pay TV service."

American Cable Association CEO Matthew M. Polka said: "ACA is shocked and appalled that FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, who has placed such urgency in reducing consumer confusion in the marketplace, has decided to leave unchanged the retransmission consent regime that a bipartisan Congress asked the agency to review in the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization Act of 2014. To do so in the face of historic numbers of broadcast blackouts and clear signs of market failure and widespread consumer harm is stunning. The chairman's decision ignores the plight of millions of consumers served by MVPDs who have repeatedly been victimized by broadcasters' heavy-handed bargaining tactics, such as pulling signals prior to a marquee event like the Oscars or baseball's All-Star game.

"In the end," Polka continue, "the chairman's decision will serve no purpose other than to perpetuate and most likely escalate negotiating schemes that will result in consumer harm on a colossal scale by ignoring tangible evidence that the retransmission consent regime is broken, outdated, and contributing to the skyrocketing increase in retransmission consent payments and a record number of TV-station initiated signal blackouts." –

TVNewsCheck

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) will hold two "Smart Hearings" on Tuesday, Aug. 9, to gather public comment on plans to address the predicted exhaustion of telephone numbers in the 717 area code service area. Those will take place at 1 and 6 p.m. at the Commonwealth Keystone Building, Hearing Room 1, 400 North St., Harrisburg.

The PUC's hearings will be broadcast live on the PUC website and will enable residents throughout the 717 area code geographic region – which covers all or part of 16 counties in central Pennsylvania – to see and hear the testimony being offered without the need to attend the hearings in person. The area is currently predicted to exhaust the supply of telephone numbers with a 717 area code in 2018. In response, the industry's recommended solution is to "overlay" a new area code throughout the existing 717 area

code, which would require all customers to dial 10 digits for every call. An alternative would be to geographically "split" the current 717 area code, which would require approximately half of the region's residents and businesses to receive a new area code.

The purpose of the "Smart Hearings" is to gather reaction to those plans or alternative suggestions. According to a PUC news release, witnesses will be able to offer their comments by telephone, from the convenience of their homes or other locations, to be included in the live Internet stream and considered as part of the Commission's review. In-person testimony at the Harrisburg hearing site also will be included, for those who prefer to comment in that manner. Witnesses have the option of not having their testimony live-streamed, if that's what they prefer.

Individuals wishing to testify at the hearings by telephone must contact the PUC's Office of Administrative Law Judge (OALJ) at 717.787.1399 and provide contact information no later than Aug. 2. Attendance in person requires no prior action; simply show up and sign in. The OALJ will try to accommodate those with special needs. For those who do, call at least five business days prior to the hearing to submit a request for any accommodations and at least 10 days in advance to request an interpreter. AT&T Relay Service is available for those who are hearing-impaired by calling 1.800.654.5988. – pennlive.com

New Yorkers will no longer be greeted by the Verizon phone book on their doorsteps.

The company won approval from state regulators Thursday to stop printing and delivering business White Pages in New York, a cost-saving and environmentally conscious move as more people search online to track down phone numbers. The decision comes six years after the state's Public Service Commission gave Verizon Communications Inc. permission to cease publication of residential White Pages, which the carrier estimates has eliminated 13,600 tons of paper waste a year.

Phone books were once a cash cow for phone operators, generating reliable profits as businesses paid for ads that were right under consumers' fingertips as they looked for local stores and services. Yet, with the rise of the internet, phone companies like Verizon and AT&T Inc. cut their exposure in the phone-book business through spinoffs and sales.

The ruling applies only to Verizon, the state's dominant phone company. The other 38 local phone operators in New York, including Frontier Communications Corp. and Windstream Holdings Inc., must continue to print and deliver directories unless they petition the PSC for a waiver. In 2015, Verizon and its partners delivered 6.3 million business directories in New York. Business listings will still be available online, and customers can still request free printed listings. – Bloomberg



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