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The VAB Voice



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FEMA REAUTHORIZATION

Congressional approval of the reauthorization of FEMA is a step closer, now that the House Transportation Committee has given its stamp of approval. The measure now goes to the full Congress.

The reauthorization calls on FEMA to establish a training program for local, state and federal officials in the use of the CAP- enabled EAS system. A new FEMA advisory panel would also be created, and will include broadcasters.

NAB: LEAVE BAS ALONE

The NAB this week asked the FCC not to reclaim the top two channels of Broadcast Auxiliary Service in its quest to find new spectrum. The NAB says there is other spectrum available without harming local TV news units, who rely on BAS spectrum to transmit news from the scene of live events. The NAB says such a move "would severely hamper broadcasters' news-gathering operations, particularly during public emergencies and breaking news events, and is therefore against the public interest."

AMERICAN PICKERS IN VT



Gina Bullard, Fred Webster & Mike Wolfe

WCAX-TV's Gina Bullard caught up with the "American Pickers" last week, as the popular History Channel show filmed a segment in Coventry at the home of local antique collector Fred Webster. Hosts Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz have visited a number of area towns for shows that will air in 2014.

WHEELER CONFIRMED AS NEW FCC CHAIRMAN



New FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler

The U.S. Senate confirmed the nomination of former cable and telecom lobbyist Tom Wheeler as the new Chairman of the FCC. The Oct. 30 confirmation was unanimous.

The strong backing of Wheeler came despite concerns from some senators and members of some advocacy groups that Wheeler may be too close to the industries he must now regulate.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) had been among the early skeptics. But, in a statement released after the

vote, said, "Tom Wheeler will be a strong advocate for consumers and the public interest at a time when the FCC is facing decisions that will shape the future of our nation's telephone network and the wireless, broadband, and video industries."

Wheeler will take over for Acting Chairman Mignon Clyburn, who will stay on as a Commissioner on the five-member panel. The Senate Tuesday also confirmed Michael O'Rielly as the newest Republican appointee to the Commission. O'Rielly served on the staff of former Sen. John Sununu of New Hampshire, and most recently has been an advisor to Senate Minority Whip John Cornyn.(R-TX).

WELCH AMONG GROUP CALLING FOR BORDER VIEWER PROTECTION

A group of eight House members, including Rep. Peter Welch of Vermont, has sent a letter to Acting FCC Chairman Mignon Clyburn regarding the pending TV spectrum auction. The group is concerned the auction may be held before broadcast treaties with Canada and Mexico are renegotiated.

The auction is expected to result in the "re-packing" of some current channel assignments, which could result in many viewers losing service from the broadcast stations they receive over the air now. Without updated treaties, the issue becomes more complex for stations in border states. Current treaties are outdated, but stations must still protect certain frequencies even

though in some cases there is no reason to do so.

The group wrote, "In the event that the Commission does not complete negotiations with

Canada and Mexico prior to reassigning broadcast channels, the Commission must ensure that consumers in border areas continue to have access to free over-the-air broadcast signals they currently receive, to the extent mandated by the Act."

The group has yet to get a response from Acting Chairman Clyburn.



Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT)



It's your choice!

When you register for this year's VAB Hall of Fame Banquet, you'll be asked to check a box for your meal preference. The choices this year are beef, chicken or vegetarian. Let us know what you'd like and we'll let the award-winning staff of the Hilton Burlington do the rest.

The banquet will be held at the Hilton on Saturday, December 7. Tickets are only \$25 each.



Our Happy Hour starts at 6 p.m. (*with a special 5:30 early bird Happy Hour for current Hall of Fame members*) and the dinner and awards program starts at 7 p.m.

If you haven't registered yet, please do so at your earliest convenience. Seating is limited, so please go to our website at www.vab.org to reserve your seats.

If you have any questions, please email Jim Condon at vab@vab.org.

Ex-RIAA executive: Artists do fine without a radio royalty

The former VP of business and legal affairs at the RIAA told a roomful of musicians and music industry people this week that many record labels and recording artists have done just fine without a performance royalty for broadcast radio.

"The U.S. has the most dynamic, thriving recorded music industry in the world and we don't have a terrestrial radio performance right," attorney Gary Greenstein said during a panel discussion at the Future Of Music Coalition Summit in Washington. "It's easy to bash radio and say the U.S. is in the same company as North Korea" and the few other countries without a radio royalty, added Greenstein. "But there are a lot of artists and labels that have done very well with the current system."

The discussion comes as Congress has once again entered the debate over radio royalties. Rep. Mel Watt (D-NC) introduced a bill last month that would put digital and on-air on equal footing. Its legislative fate appears rocky. There are no co-sponsors to the Free Market Royalty Act, and a companion bill hasn't been introduced in the Senate.

The head of a musicians union said it's time to level the playing field and establish a radio performance right. Recording Musicians Association International VP Bruce Bouton warned musicians to "beware" of direct licensing deals between several radio groups and labels, such as Big Machine Label Group, arguing they could leave musicians "out in the cold." He called such deals "workarounds" and said broadcasters are making them with labels to avoid being accountable.

"Payola is alive and well in the radio business and if we don't get a law against these things we're going to be screwed," he warned. But Wilkinson, Barker, Knauer partner David Oxenford countered that broadcast and pureplay webcasters have realized they can't turn a profit under existing digital royalty rates. "If you want free [streaming] music in the marketplace, you have to come to some sort of deal on the rates," Oxenford said.

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