

# Communications Daily

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## Top News

### Wicker Wants 'Comprehensive' Talks

#### **Little 2020 Progress Seen for Post-STELA Media Policymaking, Despite Lawmakers' Interest**

Leaders of the House and Senate Commerce committees remain interested in continuing to pursue a broad media policy legislative revamp in 2020, after negotiations on Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act reauthorization language resulted in a skinny renewal measure that addressed few additional issues (see [1912190068](#)). President Donald Trump signed the FY 2020 federal appropriations minibuss bill ([HR-1865](#)) two weeks ago that contained the STELA renewal language (see [1912240001](#)).

Lobbyists and others we spoke with doubt Hill lawmakers will have enough will in the new year to legislate on media items, given larger political dynamics and perceptions that enactment of HR-1865's STELA language took away the main vehicle for moving on matters like retransmission consent. Lawmakers drew HR-1865's STELA text from the House Commerce Committee's Television Viewer Protection Act ([HR-5035](#)) and a modified version of the House Judiciary Committee's Satellite Television Community Protection and Promotion Act ([HR-5140](#)), which together make major parts of the law permanent. The law includes a permanent, scaled-down version of STELA's distant-signal compulsory license.

"This sets the stage for maybe modernizing" the "entire video/television landscape" beginning in early 2020 on a scale that's "more comprehensive" than Congress was able to achieve via the STELA renewal process, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., told reporters shortly before the winter recess. "No one is entirely happy" with the final language but on balance it's "a fair piece of legislation" and "most people can live with it."

"I think we should start" thinking about how to proceed on the media legislative revamp over the recess, while momentum remains from the STELA process, Wicker said. "There's hardly anybody who thinks this is the way the [media] landscape should look for the next decade or two." He proposed a wider-scale 2020 media policy revamp in November in an unsuccessful bid (see [1911130055](#)) to persuade reluctant Senate Commerce members to back advancing his Satellite Television Access Reauthorization Act ([S-2789](#)). That bill would have reauthorized all of STELA through the end of 2024 and didn't address other matters (see [1911060043](#)).

House Communications Subcommittee Chairman Mike Doyle, D-Pa., told us he's also eyeing ways to tackle broader media policy issues, as he outlined during an end-of-year House Commerce [news conference](#). "I've met with" House Communications Democrats "and asked them to submit to me the things they'd like to see the subcommittee work on in 2020," including media consolidation and diversity, Doyle said. "When we get back in January ... we'll start to think about what the schedule's going to look like."

### **'Realistic' Expectations**

Senate Commerce ranking member Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and Senate Communications Subcommittee ranking member Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, told us they would like the committee to devote more time in 2020 to media policy, given their dissatisfaction with the relative lack of attention those items received during the STELA recertification process. "It's a changing marketplace," Cantwell said. "We need to ensure the laws are protecting consumers and ensuring there's enough competition."

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“I think it’s realistic” for Senate Commerce to pursue a post-STELA look at media issues, but it’s “not realistic” to expect legislation on that matter or others to advance “until we’re done” with the chamber’s to-be-scheduled Trump impeachment trial process, Schatz said. “I think there’s an opportunity to legislate” on many communications policy matters, but “we have to have the will” to do it and it’s not clear that’s possible. He cited “diversity in media ownership” as a top focus if Senate Commerce decides to hold related policy hearings. Schatz noted diversity concerns during a June STELA-related hearing (see [1906050083](#)).

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., told us she’s among those seeking to address additional media items in 2020, though noting the STELA renewal text incorporated amended language from her Truth-in-Billing, Remedies and User Empowerment over Fees (True Fees) Act ([HR-1220](#)). That bill’s language will let customers end contracts with providers without early termination fees if the provider increases prices. The STELA text also lets small MVPDs collectively negotiate for retrans using a qualified buying group.

“I certainly hope” House Commerce will take up other media legislation in the new year, including the Modern Television Act ([HR-3994](#)), Eshoo said. That bill would repeal parts of the 1992 Cable Act, including retrans rules (see [1907290053](#)). Eshoo and House Minority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., unsuccessfully pushed to attach HR-3994 to a STELA renewal package. “I think we have the capacity to have” a broader discussion that wasn’t possible during the recertification debate, Eshoo said. Doyle confirmed Eshoo submitted her House Communications legislative priorities.

House Commerce ranking member Greg Walden, R-Ore., said he’s “always open” to talking about media issues, noting “we always have an obligation to look at legacy regulations that are unfair to the incumbent.” Broadcasters achieved a big win with the STELA language because Congress didn’t push for “some big legislative effort” to use it to address retrans rules, he said. “When you look at the revenues that broadcasters make on retransmission consent agreements, that’s a huge underpinning of their cash flow now, which allows them to do everything they do in the community.” If “I were a broadcaster, I’d be pretty happy” with the new STELA text, Walden said.

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### 'Anyone's Guess'

“I think there’s appetite to get further reforms through” in 2020 given the interest shown by Wicker and some Democrats, but it requires a viable legislative vehicle, said Public Knowledge Senior Policy Counsel Jenna Leventoff. “It’s anyone’s guess” what avenues will be available to legislate because STELA has long been the “most obvious vehicle” for advancing other media issues. PK believes the renewal language is a “huge win for consumers” because of the addition of the HR-1220 text, permanent extension of the good-faith negotiations rules and other provisions, Leventoff said. “There’s something for everyone,” contrary to some observers’ view that the narrowed distant-signal license meant broadcasters benefited most from the final measure.

R Street Institute Tech Policy Manager Tom Struble doesn’t “realistically expect much of anything” legislative to get through Congress in 2020, especially while the impeachment trial process grips the Senate. “I’d be very surprised if they can pass” a media policy bill given both rancor over impeachment and the 2020 presidential campaign cycle, he said. “Getting something done and engaging in the debate are two very different things,” a media lobbyist said. It’s “going to be difficult to get a post office named after George Washington through Congress” during an election year. “You’ve got bipartisan” interest, particularly from Eshoo and Scalise, but “I don’t think there’ll be a change in law” on retrans any time soon, the media lobbyist said.

There’s “a decent prospect” for lawmakers to get part of the way toward a comprehensive bill because broadcasters, cable companies and other media stakeholders “have things they want that can only be done through Congress,” Struble said. He noted broadcasters may want lawmakers to address the FCC’s authority on media ownership rules following the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeal’s fall *Prometheus IV* decision (see [1909230067](#)). Other stakeholders also “have a lot of issues they still want” lawmakers to include in any post-STELA legislation, many of which are tackled in HR-3994, Struble said.

Officials will continue to be interested in seeing whether AT&T’s DirecTV will be able or willing to comply with part of the STELA renewal text that requires satellite providers using the distant-signal license to serve all 210 designated market areas (see [1911180014](#)), Struble said. Lawmakers repeatedly raised concerns amid the STELA debate about the 12 markets where DirecTV provides limited or no access to locally broadcast networks’ stations. AT&T says the markets have access to local stations’ terrestrial signals.

Others contend broadcasters’ ability to persuade lawmakers to narrow the distant-signal license’s scope likely means they would be able to forestall any near-term attempt to address retrans or other media issues not favorable to the industry. There was already “no way” either chamber could advance further media legislation “in the middle of an election year,” but the broadcasters’ lobbying win makes that even tougher, one communications sector lobbyist told us. The term “video marketplace” is code for looking at” a retrans revamp, something that’s not on broadcasters’ legislative wish list. — **Jimm Phillips**

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### 'Goldilocks' Band

## More Details on C Band, 6 GHz for Wi-Fi, Could Come at CES Next Week

CES will give FCC Chairman Ajit Pai an opening to further lay out plans for commission action on the C band, industry officials said. It’s the first CES since the broader launch of 5G in the U.S., and

numerous federal policymakers are expected to speak. Most policymakers stayed home for the 2019 show because of the prolonged federal shutdown. Industry officials said 2020 is shaping up to be a big year for spectrum and 5G, and for Wi-Fi and unlicensed. Pai is expected to circulate a 6 GHz item, the key Wi-Fi band, most likely for the March meeting.

Pai speaks Tuesday, the day before his blog on the Jan. 30 commissioners' meeting and two days before orders are to be circulated. Pai's plans on the C band appear to still be taking shape and the FCC wants big players to develop a plan that can gain consensus among most stakeholders, industry officials said. The FCC didn't comment.

The FCC is running into problems with jurisdictional issues and a vote is unlikely in January, said a former FCC spectrum official. "I don't doubt that they will get something done," the lawyer said: The FCC "can at least start an auction by the end of the year."

If Pai "sticks to the high level principles, as he has done at the congressional hearings and other public forums, then he could announce a vote at the January or February meeting, but it would not move the ball forward, at least from a Wall Street perspective," New Street's Blair Levin told us: "If, however, he starts to address the myriad of details about the auction, the transition, payments to be made to various stakeholders, and the rights and obligations of various stakeholders, then it would be a meaningful event in terms of helping Wall Street understand the likely direction and timing of the process."

"One thing everyone agrees on is that getting underutilized C band spectrum freed up for 5G applications is in everyone's best interest." said Larry Downes, public policy project director at the Georgetown Center for Business and Public Policy. "Pai has concluded that the FCC can best achieve that goal and maximize public benefits through an FCC-engineered auction and repacking process."

Downes said questions remain. "There's no question that Pai, in large part through creation of the Office of Economics and Analysis, has greatly improved the speed and efficiency with which the FCC can design and execute spectrum auctions, and do so without saddling them with the kind of limitations and political favors unconnected to the public interest that plagued some earlier auctions," he said: "If the agency can pull it off by the end of 2020, I can't see how anyone has cause to complain."

The C band is "valuable Goldilocks spectrum," offering a balance of capacity and coverage for 5G, said Brent Skorup of the Mercatus Center. There has been "lots of lobbying about who gets access to it and who gets paid," he said. "For decades the FCC has repurposed spectrum on an ad hoc basis using different mechanisms to transfer spectrum from legacy users to new users."

Rather than "up zone" the C band, allowing incumbents to sell their spectrum privately, "as the incumbents wanted," Pai "has pledged to conduct a public auction so that auction proceeds can go to federal deficit reduction," Skorup said: "The FCC will likely take comments on the best way forward and I wouldn't be surprised if an overlay license auction or an incentive auction, or some combination of the two, are on the table because both types of public auctions were pretty successful in the past."

"The key question is whether a mechanism can be established to ensure that the new satellites needed for a rapid transition are ordered before the auction takes place," said spectrum and satellite consultant Tim Farrar. "That will require the cooperation of the satellite operators, which is unlikely to be forthcoming unless there is clarity on how they will be incentivized," Farrar said: "Although it is a good sign that Pai is

looking to move quickly, it remains to be seen how the satellite operators will respond to his comments and whether a January order will be able to provide a clear road map to incentivizing the satellite operators or if this element is deferred to the next phase of the FCC proceeding.”

Free State Foundation President Randolph May regrets Pai has given up on a private sale of the C band. “I now hope that the FCC comes up with a plan that retains sufficient financial incentives for the incumbent satellite companies to give up enough C-Band spectrum to spur 5G deployment in a timely fashion,” he said. “Without sufficient incentives, the whole process could bog down in significant delays,” he said.

A public auction “provides the most prudent policy decision for spectrum management and will be the most equitable step along the 5G continuum,” said Business in the Public Interest Chairman Adonis Hoffman. — *Howard Buskirk*

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### **Burden Outweighed?**

## **Broadcasters, NCTA Want Changes to FCC Political File Policy**

The FCC’s clarification of political file rules creates new, subjective disclosure obligations that aren’t backed up in the law, burden companies and raise First Amendment questions, said broadcasters, network affiliates and [NCTA](#) in comments posted Tuesday in docket 19-363 supporting NAB’s petition for reconsideration (see [1911180068](#)). “This decision will harm the entire local advertising ecosystem and burden the speech of political and nonpolitical advertisers alike,” said a joint [filing](#) from Gray Television, E.W. Scripps, Meredith, Block Communications and WBOC. Transparency groups including Campaign Legal Center, Sunlight Foundation and Common Cause [disagree](#). “Any possible burden” is “clearly outweighed by the benefits of public disclosure,” the groups said.

“Something will have to give, and the casualties will be political advertisers, non-political advertisers and viewers alike,” said the filing from Gray, Block and other broadcasters. The agency’s clarification of the disclosure rules will force broadcasters to spend additional time reviewing political ad sales, and err on the side of reporting everything, broadcasters said. “Staff will have to read and analyze the content of every third-party ad,” [said](#) broadcast attorney Jack Goodman in comments filed on his own behalf. “If a state issue ad, on its face, has nothing to do with any federal election, what should a broadcaster hoping to avoid liability do? Report the ad,” said a joint [filing](#) from the affiliate stations of Fox, CBS, ABC and NBC. “The timing could not be worse for the kind of imprecision and perverse incentives that the Clarification Orders have injected into the political advertising ecosystem.”

The U.S. Supreme Court indicated in a previous ruling that the FCC’s disclosure rules could be vulnerable to legal challenge if they’re overbroad, said several commenters. The FCC’s clarification could face First Amendment challenges if it isn’t changed, said Gray, Block and other broadcasters. A recent ruling against Maryland in the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals “provides a road map on how a court would review such a challenge,” said the joint broadcaster filing (see [1912270043](#)). “Notably, the Maryland law imposed far less burdens than the FCC created in the Political File Order,” said Goodman.

“There is no merit” to suggestions that the FCC’s clarification “somehow raises constitutional concerns,” said the joint filing from transparency groups. “The Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the Commission’s disclosure requirements against First Amendment challenges” brought by the NAB.

The transparency groups also disputed broadcaster complaints about the increased burden imposed by the rules. “It is a relatively simple matter for station personnel to determine if an ad identifies a qualified candidate for public office and/or communicates a message regarding ‘a national legislative issue of public importance,’” said the filing. Assessment of the burden on broadcasters should also take into account that “stations make large sums of money from political ads,” the groups said. “If stations find the reporting requirements too burdensome, they are not required to air political ads.” Some broadcaster filings said the FCC’s clarification will chill political speech.

Several commenters said the FCC should have held a public comment period before clarifying the rules. Not doing so meant the new policies offer few considerations for MVPDs, said NCTA. The FCC “failed to account at all for how these new standards would apply to cable operators, which face additional compliance challenges,” NCTA said. The new policies are “an overly strict standard that fails to account for the frenetic pace of political advertising sales during the heat of an election.”

The agency should reconsider the policy changes and apply a “good faith” standard to station efforts to identify the issues and candidates in political ads, said the affiliate groups. The agency should clarify that ads in state and local elections aren’t subject to federal disclosure rules and that candidate ads don’t fall under the disclosure rules for issue ads, several broadcast commenters said. Making such changes would restore certainty in the FCC’s rules, the affiliate group said. “Without them, the Commission’s Rules will remain over broad and vague—and will likely be subject to challenge in the courts.” — **Monty Tayloe**

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## **Portman, Wyden Debate Bill**

### **Massachusetts Groups Draft Letter Criticizing Federal Study of Sex-Trafficking Bill**

Three Massachusetts-based sex-abuse survivor groups are drafting a letter to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., criticizing her bill directing a federal study of 2018 anti-sex-trafficking legislation (see [1912170041](#)). Warren introduced the bill with Reps. Ro Khanna and Barbara Lee, both California Democrats, and Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore. It would direct a study of the small percentage of consensual sex workers who claim a 2018 anti-sex trafficking law made their lives less safe and their trade more difficult, Living in Freedom Together (LIFT) CEO Nikki Bell told us. Some 200 survivors signed the draft letter, she said. The House version of the bill is [HR-5448](#).

Bell’s preparing the letter with the Eva Center and My Life My Choice, groups she said represent the majority of sex workers, who are coerced and abused. Bell said the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers-Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (SESTA-FOSTA) was a positive step because it blocked major websites from openly facilitating sex trafficking. Warren voted for SESTA; her office didn’t comment.

SESTA has been successful because “fewer women and children are being sold online,” bill author Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, told us before the congressional winter recess. “It’s disrupted what was open trafficking online and not because people have been criminally prosecuted but because companies have



chosen to shut down now that we've exposed what was happening, which was people knowingly selling women and children online."

If the Department of Health and Human Services does a study, it "should include what's been the impact on women and girls who are sold online," Portman said. Backpage was shut down because it "was literally altering ads to take out references to underage girls, so they could still get the money from the ads and exploit these girls," he said.

Wyden, who opposed SESTA, said his fears about the legislation have played out. "I thought that these horrible sex traffickers were going to move to the dark web," he told us before the break. "I think that's clearly been the case. I said it on the floor of the Senate. I think the reality has borne that out, and I think the study" is a constructive development.

If SESTA-FOSTA was beneficial, proponents should welcome a study because it will vindicate their claims, said NetChoice Vice President Carl Szabo. He cited various complaints from sex worker groups saying the original legislation makes it harder to screen clients and do their jobs safely. Laws have consequences, he said, and it's encouraging that Warren and other Democrats are reviewing the bill's impact. He said until Congress understands the effects of SESTA-FOSTA, the sole amendment to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, it should avoid any further alterations to the content liability shield.

LIFT isn't opposed to a study, but as it appears in the Senate bill, it wouldn't account for the victims and children forced into the sex trade, said Bell. It's "frustrating," she said, because there's no data indicating the groups pushing for this study are anything more than the minority in the sex trade. She wants a comprehensive study, saying the legislation as written is "insulting to survivors." — **Karl Herchenroeder**

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## Comm Daily® Notebook

### WRC Was a Success for US, NTIA Official Says

The U.S. had a successful World Radiocommunication Conference, NTIA acting Administrator Doug Kinkoph said in a year-end [blog post](#). "Nearly a dozen NTIA employees were part of a U.S. delegation that secured important agreements on 5G allocations in the 'millimeter wave' spectrum," Kinkoph said Tuesday: "The delegation's success at this conference will directly benefit U.S. industries as they seek to

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maintain and advance American technology leadership across the globe.” Others, including FCC Commissioner Mike O’Rielly, said the conference had mixed results for the U.S. (see [1912180045](#)).

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## Capitol Hill

### Trump Signs Anti-Robocall Traced Act

President Donald Trump signed the Pallone-Thune Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence (Traced) Act (S-151) Monday, drawing praise from bill sponsors House Commerce Committee Chairman [Frank Pallone](#), D-N.J., and Senate Communications Subcommittee Chairman [John Thune](#), R-S.D., among others. The [compromise](#) S-151, which passed the House and Senate in December (see [1912190068](#)), combines provisions from the original Senate-passed version of the bill and the House-passed Stopping Bad Robocalls Act ([HR-3375](#)). The measure allows the FCC to levy civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per call when the caller intentionally flouts the Telephone Consumer Protection Act. “This historic legislation will provide American consumers with even greater protection against annoying unsolicited robocalls,” a White House spokesperson said in a statement. “American families deserve control over their communications, and this legislation will update our laws and regulations to stiffen penalties, increase transparency, and enhance government collaboration to stop unwanted solicitation.” FCC Chairman Ajit Pai [lauded](#) “the additional tools and flexibility that this law affords us. Specifically, I am glad that the agency now has a longer statute of limitations during which we can pursue scammers and I welcome the removal of a previously-required warning we had to give to unlawful robocallers before imposing tough penalties.” The Traced Act “will put Americans back in control of their phones,” Pallone [said](#). “These calls are not just annoying—they also are scams targeted at consumers.” The bill puts the federal government “one step closer to closing the books on illegal robocalls,” said House Commerce ranking member Greg Walden, R-Ore., and House Communications Subcommittee ranking member Bob Latta, R-Ohio, in a [news release](#). “But we are well aware that the bad actors will do all they can to get to consumers, so Congress will need to stay vigilant to protect the American people from illegal calls and scams.” Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., [said](#) “as Americans ring in the New Year, we now know that our phones will soon ring a lot less with annoying robocalls” because Trump signed the Traced Act into law.

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### House Consumer Panel Sets Jan. 8 Hearing on Digital Manipulation, Deception

The House Consumer Protection Subcommittee scheduled a [hearing](#) on “Manipulation and Deception in the Digital Age,” at 10:30 a.m. Jan. 8 in 2123 Rayburn.

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## Wireline

### Comments Due Jan. 17 on Viya Petition to FCC to Clarify Connect USVI Fund Rules

Opposition comments are due Jan. 17, replies Jan. 27, to an FCC petition for reconsideration by Virgin Islands Telephone (d/b/a Viya) from early December, said a [filing](#) for docket 18-143 and Thursday’s *Federal*

*Register*. The petition asks the agency to clarify the weighting that buried coax cable and buried fiber would contribute to scored bids in the Uniendo a Puerto Rico and Connect USVI funds (see [1912100043](#)).

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## Wireless

### Wi-Fi Alliance Says Sharing 6 GHz Band Won't Be Threat to Utilities

The Wi-Fi Alliance assured members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that Wi-Fi in the 6 GHz band won't pose a threat to power companies. Last month, all three FERC commissioners wrote the FCC to express concerns (see [1912190082](#)). "Wi-Fi Alliance recognizes the need for and supports rigorous protection of electric utilities and other critical incumbent operations in the 6 GHz band," said a [filing](#), posted Tuesday in docket 18-295. "To the contrary, there is no question that unlicensed devices operating in the 6 GHz band must protect existing operations. That is why Wi-Fi Alliance supports mandatory testing and certification of all [automated frequency coordination] systems prior to implementation in the 6 GHz frequency band." The alliance proposed "a comprehensive set of regulatory parameters for AFC systems and recommended that AFC systems must demonstrate their ability to fully protect licensed incumbent fixed service links such as those used by electric utilities," the group said: "One of the components of AFC certification will certainly be testing and evaluation—processes the FCC has recently undertaken with respect to similar geo-location database-driven spectrum access solutions in the 3.5 GHz band." Wi-Fi advocates see the 6 GHz band as critical to meeting growing demand for unlicensed spectrum (see [1906250015](#)).

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## Telecom Notes

### FTC to Congress: Do Not Call Registrations Increasing

The FTC's Do Not Call registry has more than "239 million active registrations, an increase of more than 4.1 million registrations from the previous fiscal year," the agency [said](#) Tuesday in its biennial [report](#) to Congress. The registry allows consumers to block telemarketing calls. In 2019, "2,014 businesses and other entities paid more than \$12 million to access the Registry," the FTC said.

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## Consumer Electronics

### CTA Won't Comment if It Plans Extra Security for Ivanka Trump's CES Appearance

"Safety and security at CES are important to us," emailed CTA Tuesday to our questions about whether the show plans extra security precautions for the keynote appearance of White House adviser

Ivanka Trump (see [1912300045](#)). “We do not comment on security plans involving individual speakers,” said CTA. —**PG**

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## Intellectual Property

### Apple Watch Uses Atrial Fibrillation Invention Stolen From NY Cardiologist, Alleges Complaint

A Long Island cardiologist accused Apple of stealing his atrial fibrillation-detection invention and building it into the Apple Watch. Joseph Wiesel, a board-certified cardiologist on the faculty of the New York University School of Medicine, landed a March 2006 [patent](#) for an “innovative approach” that “allowed patients to properly monitor atrial fibrillation in a non-hospital setting,” said his [complaint](#) (in Pacer) Friday in U.S. District Court in Central Islip, New York. “Prior to this, patients could only use manual palpation of the pulse to detect atrial fibrillation,” it said. Apple had “indisputable actual knowledge” of the patent since “at least as early” as September 2017 when it introduced the Series 4 Apple Watch with embedded atrial fibrillation-detection technology, said the complaint. That’s also when Wiesel first “engaged” Apple, “through numerous letters and claim charts,” with notice of its infringing practices, the complaint said. Apple since has compounded its bad behavior by introducing the technology into the Series 5, “but also updating the software on the existing legacy Series 1, 2, and 3 Apple Watches to enable the infringing features,” it alleged. Apple has “refused to negotiate in good faith to avoid this lawsuit,” it said. Apple’s actions, “despite continued warnings,” are evidence of a “willful disregard” of Wiesel’s rights “and a desire to profit irrespective of U.S. patent laws,” it said. Wiesel seeks “recovery of past damages” through payment of a “reasonable royalty” and is “entitled” to license fees on Apple Watch shipments on “a going-forward basis,” it said. Apple didn’t comment Tuesday. —**PG**

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## Cable

### Cable TV Pricing Law Called 'Long Overdue,' With Consumer Groups Applauding

The “true fees” cable TV pricing rules adopted as part of the omnibus spending bill passed in December (see [1912190068](#)) are “long overdue,” with the cable industry frequently camouflaging rate hikes as hidden fees instead putting them into advertised rates, CCG Consulting President Doug Dawson [blogged](#) Monday. He said more honesty about pricing could accelerate cord cutting even further. The legislation applies only to cable TV pricing, raising the risk that cable companies could try to shift hidden fees to their broadband or phone service, Dawson said. “I suspect the cable companies will somehow not come clean about bundling prices for cable TV, even with this new law,” he said. Public Knowledge also [applauded](#) the legislation. Consumer Reports (CR), which championed the measure, told us its support for the legislation stemmed from its own finding that consumers can pay up to \$450 a year in such fees. Along with the requirement that consumers are told the complete monthly price, including all fees and taxes, when signing up with cable service, consumers also get a 24-hour window to cancel service without penalty, CR said. NCTA and America’s Communications Association didn’t comment.

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