

One-sided retransmission “negotiations” leave small cable operators smarting

In light of another recent increase in fees for cable television services from corporate broadcasters and local broadcast stations, WT Services finds itself in good company smarting over one-sided retransmission consent “negotiations.”

In fact, survey findings from the American Cable Association show that the prevailing sentiment among cable service operators in smaller markets is that broadcasters use their market power to bully small and medium-sized cable operators like WT Services into lopsided deals that hurt the small operators and their customers.

Some 76 percent of survey respondents claim corporate broadcasters use a “take it or leave it” approach to retransmission negotiations.

One survey respondent says the process is essentially not a negotiation at all, “it’s an agreement forced on us.” Another respondent characterized retransmis-

sion consent negotiations as “extreme bullying and take it or leave it attitude.”

ACA operators claim broadcasters use retransmission negotiations to demand huge rate hikes and force unwanted channels into program lineups.

WT Services negotiates with large TV programmers but ultimately is forced to either drop programs or increase monthly charges that customers pay for cable services in order to offer a high level of channel choices and programming.

Matt Polka, president and CEO of the American Cable Association, says nearly 75 percent of its members seek to keep prices down for their customers.

“Time and time again corporate broadcasters don’t negotiate fairly—or at all. Consumers are left holding the bag. Cable operators are often blamed by their customers for rate hikes and unpopular channels, but it is the broadcasters

who dictate how much customers are forced to pay, and which channels and networks will be carried,” says Polka.

Making things especially tough on companies like WT Services, broadcasters generally charge the highest per-subscriber fees to the smallest cable operators and their customers—and the demands keep going up each year.

Cable retransmission fees are projected to cost U.S. customers and satellite and cable operators \$11.6 billion by 2022. That’s up from \$8.6 billion in 2017, and represents a 35 percent rate increase in only five years. Retransmission fees such as those WT Services is forced to pay are the fastest growing part of monthly cable TV bills for consumers.

Unless retransmission consent negotiations change for the better, 63 percent of survey respondents expressed concern that if the process stays the same it will harm their customers.

- So-called negotiations between corporate broadcasters and small market cable service operators are so one-sided in favor of broadcasters as to make small operators feel bullied into lopsided deals.

- Small operators and their customers are hurt by lopsided deals.

- American Cable Association operators say they are forced to take unwanted channels in program lineups.

- ACA members are struggling to keep cable service prices down for their customers, and feel that negotiations aren’t done fairly.

- Cable retransmission fees projected to cost U.S. customers \$11.6 billion by 2022.



Last call for WT Services scholarship applications, kids; Deadline for paperwork is a fast-approaching April 10

Last call for scholarship applications, kids. **April 10 is the deadline to apply for a 2018 academic scholarship from WT Services.**

Hard to believe, isn't it, that the time for spring commencement for high school seniors in the region is only a succession of weeks away. Likely the prospect of upcoming prom and other fun activities are much more on the minds of area high schoolers right now than what's coming up at scholarship assemblies in May. But take a little time to check into paperwork that could pay off in financial assistance with college.

For the fifth consecutive year WT Services will be awarding scholarships to selected applicants who are graduating seniors from Hereford, Friona, Bovina, and Bushland high schools in 2018.

At this late date, the quickest way to access an application form is via the WT Services home page at wtservices.net where necessary forms may be downloaded.

Scholarships are open only to students whose parents or guardians are WT Services customers, or, to students who are WT Services customers.

Applicants must be either high school seniors who are candidates for graduation this spring, have completed high school, or have received their GED.

Scholarship money will be disbursed in increments per semester.

An application form, accompanied by two letters of recommendation, and a

wallet-size photo must be submitted.

One letter of recommendation must be from a teacher, principal, or counselor from the high school that the applicant is currently attending.

Applications must be fully completed, legibly typed or written, have no attachments other than the

photo and two required letters of recommendation, and must be received at the offices of WT Services, Inc. P.O. Box 1776, Hereford, Texas 79045, no later than April 10, 2018.

Applicants may be asked to attend an interview at the discretion of the board of directors of WTRT.

Managed Wi-Fi service provides password protected control of devices

Managed Wi-Fi service that provides password protected control of devices on Wi-Fi in homes is available from WT Services and West Texas Rural Telephone Cooperative.

Customers can obtain Managed Wi-Fi service at a lease rate of \$9.95 per month. Patrons can contact either WT Services at 360-9000 or WTRT at 364-3331 to make lease arrangements.

A Mesh Satellite system when coupled with the Managed Wi-Fi complements service delivery by extending Wi-Fi coverage and capacity within the subscriber's home.

The configuration can improve in-home Wi-Fi coverage, eliminate the

Wi-Fi dead spot in homes, and prevent pirating of Wi-Fi services by unscrupulous individuals in the same neighborhood who might look to freeload Wi-Fi service from a paying customer.

The equipment also permits remote troubleshooting of Wi-Fi coverage issues, avoiding costly service calls. Managed Wi-Fi Service offers extensive troubleshooting capabilities, remote software downloads and easy to use service activation that ensures that services are maintained and delivered without needless service calls or hardware upgrades.

Switching and routing functions manage premises network traffic at speeds up to 1 Gbps.

Managed Wi-Fi offers an agile and responsive service platform, delivering data throughout a subscriber's home.

Managed Wi-Fi Service interfaces include carrier class wireless networking with Wi-Fi and four Gigabit Ethernet ports for IPTV and data services, two integrated voice lines supporting carrier grade VoIP and network-based TDM voice circuits, a USB port for home networking services, and an option for RF video.

Managed Wi-Fi allows the service provider to establish a strategic location for the delivery and control of broadband service within the home or business.