

# Detroit Legal News

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## PROFILE IN BRIEF

By JOHN MINNIS  
Legal News

### Kaye 'Chach' Tertzag Purple Haze



Kaye 'Chach' Tertzag

The world of golf has the coveted green jacket. The world of Detroit jurisprudence now has the coveted purple jacket in honor of the late Kaye "Chach" Tertzag.

The well-liked retired Wayne County Circuit judge, who died Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2009, at the age of 70 after a short battle with bile-duct cancer, is

remembered for many things — his judicial skills, his legal acumen, his warm love and respect for his fellow man and his purple sport coat. In fact, one of the judge's last wishes is that he not be laid out in his purple sport coat so that it could be left for posterity.

Attorney/blogger and Tertzag friend and colleague Michael J. Butler floated the Purple Sportcoat Award idea in a blog post following a memorial ceremony in Allen Park attended by hundreds of the popular judge's friends, colleagues and family.

"Reflecting afterward," Butler wrote, "I realized the memorial was nowhere near long enough. ... Given his example as a lawyer, judge and facilitator, perhaps some group might consider awarding a yearly 'Tertzag Master of Practice' Award, bestowing a purple jacket (instead of green) to the winner. An idea worth thinking about."

In a blog comment following the post, Kraig "Love" Tertzag, wrote:

"It is me that was left the purple Versace sport coat. I was going to wear it to deliver my speech at the memorial but could not get it tailored in time. I am the one in the family that took my style cues from my father. Needless to say, I am the flamboyant one, purple sport coat and all. I am humbled when I read such beautiful words about my father. I thank you. Be well!"

Another Tertzag son, Kyle, liked the sport coat award concept, and the idea gained support from other family members, lawyers and members of the famous "Detroit Contingent" group led Judge Tertzag.

"That is where it really started," said Butler. "We now have a recipient, a date and location and a keynote speaker."

The first annual Kaye Tertzag Tribute Dinner and inaugural Purple Sportcoat Award presentation will be held Feb. 25 at the Park Place Banquet Hall at Park and Outer Drive in Dearborn, just south of Michigan Avenue.

The keynote speaker will be Norman D. Tucker, of counsel with Sommers Schwartz. Tucker is a leading plaintiff's attorney specializing in birth-related injuries and anesthesia mishaps.

"What do you get when the judge loves the law, loves people and likes attorneys?" asks Tucker. "You get a great judge, an example to others and, win or lose, the assurance that justice is being served. Judge Tertzag is a daily reminder: It is who you are as much as how much you think you know that makes our society of laws work."

The first Purple Sportcoat Award recipient will be retired Wayne County Circuit Judge James J. Rashid, who served with Tertzag for many years and who, like Tertzag, started a facilitation practice after stepping down from the bench.

The Purple Sportcoat Award and plaque recipient is chosen by a committee consisting of family friends and colleagues: wife, Kathy Tertzag; See **PROFILE**, Page 2

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## Taking initiative to ensure equal access State Bar works on behalf of clients, attorneys, students with disabilities

By CYNTHIA PRICE  
Legal News

The State Bar of Michigan takes on a broader role than that of a professional organization, exploring issues and policy with a view to improving the critically valuable discipline it serves.

Nowhere is this more evident than in its Equal Access Initiative (EAI), driven by the attorneys of the Bar and cutting across equality issues. The EAI won a major award earlier this year as Michigan's Corp! Magazine named it a Diversity Champion.

The Disability Project is a stellar EAI effort, weaving together various threads of work on the courts' treatment of people with disabilities, attorneys as well as clients.

The complex history of the project goes back at least as far as reports generated in 1989 concerning the public perception about the justice system's fairness. Approximately one third of those surveyed felt that the legal system offered "unequal justice for all." Among other actions, the State Bar and the courts formed the Open Justice Commission to address the situation. Hon. Marilyn Kelly, now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and Hon. Harold Hood became co-chairs.

In 2001 the Open Justice Commission released "A Report on Access to the Legal System in Michigan for Persons with Disabilities."

The report is comprehensive and clear. The approach taken is primarily that of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, working primarily to flesh out the meaning and scope of ADA "accommodations."

The chair of the Disabilities Committee at

the time, Hon. Paul Teranes, states in the report, "The members of the Disabilities Committee believe that for too long people with disabilities have been the silent minority. They are often required to respond to stereotypical attitudes about their abilities and face physical barriers to prevent their full participation in the judicial process."

The Commission did literature and direct research to determine the status in three areas: law schools and how they accommodate students; how courts dealt with attorneys with disabilities; and how courts worked on behalf of clients with disabilities.

The results were not disheartening. Literature search showed that Michigan was doing a better job than many states, and most people contacted whether at the schools or the courts had familiarity with the ADA. The most challenging area, and an emerging issue across the U.S., is that of clients and students with cognitive and mental health disabilities.

The recommendations that came out of the report were specific and feasible; for example, that a web-based tool kit be developed to help administrators follow best practices, or that the standing State Bar Committee on unauthorized practice of law include consideration of exceptions for advocates who

work with people with disabilities.

The EAI, through its Disabilities Committee, is responsible for overseeing implementation of those recommendations.

According to Greg Conyers, the State Bar's Diversity Director since Oct. 1, the Open Justice Commission evolved into the EAI in the early part of this decade as the commission sunsetted. Conyers was formerly Director of

Justice Initiatives, which had its own department but is now under the Executive Director.

His current administrative assistance

Judy Hershkowitz, has been with the justice project since its inception.

The Disabilities Committee is part of the EAI, which is in turn one of four Justice Initiatives at the State Bar. The others, which often touch on disabilities issues as well, are the Pro Bono Initiative, the Justice Policy Initiative, and the new Criminal Issues Initiative, which covers collateral consequences and related matters.

Within that framework, the Disabilities Committee is a powerful and effective committee, as witness the fact that at least two other states have inquired about it, one of which is now using information from its newsletter in continuing legal education courses.

The Disabilities Newsletter is indeed a focal point for the project, with research on topics such as disabled veterans, family court issues with schools, deaf individuals, non-visible disabilities, and most recently guardianship issues. A 2009 subject addressed the 2001 report directly: "Conflicts Involving Counsel and Adult Clients with Cognitive Disabilities."

*"The Disabilities Project is a great example of how the Bar's Justice Initiatives . . . are working in partnership with a growing number of organizations in Michigan that care about our justice system."*

— Terri Stangl

## FTA and ABA agree to dismiss remaining counts in 'red flags' suit FTC has until mid-January to appeal ruling

By KIMBERLY ATKINS  
The Daily Record Newswire

The Federal Trade Commission and the American Bar Association have agreed to dismiss the remaining counts of the lawsuit the ABA brought to stop the agency from enforcing its "red flags" anti-data theft regulations against lawyers.

However, the ABA reserved the right to renew its claims on the remaining counts of the complaint should the FTC appeal the summary judgment.

In October, a federal judge granted the ABA summary judgment on one count of the complaint, blocking the FTC from enforcing the "red flags" rules against lawyers.

The lawsuit also sought other declaratory and injunctive relief, but after the summary judgment ruling, the parties were asked to file a joint statement explaining their positions as to whether the remaining claims need be addressed.

Last week, the ABA and the FTC filed the joint statement as well as their respective proposed orders. Both the ABA and the FTC agreed in the filings that the court should rule that the regs are not applicable to attorneys, and that the remaining counts should be dismissed.

If either of the proposed orders is accepted, it would bring to an end the first round of the legal battle between the attorney group and

the agency, although the FTC has until January to decide if it will formally appeal the court's ruling on the summary judgment order.

The FTC stated in the joint statement that it assumes "because the court granted summary judgment on Count 1 of the ABA's complaint, it intended to preclude [application of] the Red Flags Rule to lawyers engaged in the practice of law, regardless of the particular billing arrangement entered into between the attorney and client."

But it reserved some wiggle room in case the court enters a narrower ruling.

"If, however, the court did not intend such a broad result, the court should enter an appropriately narrower injunction, or permit further proceedings to allow the parties to brief the appropriate scope of the injunction," the FTC said.

The FTC also asked the court not to extend the injunction "as requested by the ABA [to] 'any successor regulation promulgated by the Commission under §114 of the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003 ... against lawyers engaged in the practice of law.'"

"It is the Commission's position that such relief would go beyond the issues asserted in the ABA's complaint and adjudicated by this court," the agency said in the joint statement.

The FTC has until mid-January to decide if it will appeal the ruling that precludes it from enforcing the rules against attorneys.

## Duly Sworn



Photo by John Meiu  
In his chambers earlier this month, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Robert J. Colombo (left) swore in Robert Alan Welch, Jr. (third from left), who was accompanied by his wife, Ann Marie Vercurryse Welch, and his father-in-law, Robert M. Vercurryse.

## DAILY BRIEFS

### Barbara McQuade approved as new U.S. attorney

DETROIT (AP) — Barbara McQuade has been approved as the government's top law enforcer in Detroit and 34 counties in eastern Michigan.

The U.S. Senate's Web site says McQuade was confirmed as U.S. attorney last Thursday. She's been an assistant U.S. attorney prosecuting national security cases in Detroit.

McQuade replaces Terrence Berg, who has been U.S. attorney since August 2008 when Stephen Murphy became a federal judge.

### Court closings

The Wayne County Probate Court closed for the holiday season at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 23 and reopen on Monday, January 4 at 8 a.m.

The court will be open Dec. 30 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to accept pleadings, and to conduct mental health and emergency hearings.

The 36th District Court will be open on Dec. 30, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to accommodate the following limited services: Ticket fine payments and bond postings; civil case filings and pleadings; criminal arraignments.

The court will be closed on Thursday, Dec. 31 and Friday, Jan. 1. Only criminal arraignments will be conducted.

The Third Circuit Court Civil, Criminal and Family Divisions will be open Dec. 30 for essential services only, including criminal arraign-

ments, probation violation, and failure to appear warrants, personal protection orders, parental waivers, and other emergency civil and family division matters. The County Clerk's Office will be open to accept civil and domestic relations pleadings and new case filings 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on those days.

The Third Circuit Court will be closed on Thursday, Dec. 31 and Friday, Jan. 1 in observance of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, and will re-open on Monday, Jan. 4. The emergency procedure that is posted in the Detroit Legal News every Friday should be followed for any after-hour emergency matter.

The Michigan Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) will be closed for the holidays on Thursday, Dec. 31; and Friday, Jan. 1. The Michigan Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and SCAO will be open on Wednesday, Dec. 30.

### Ask the Judges series continues Jan. 14

As part of its "Ask the Judges" series, the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association will host a panel discussion at 5 p.m. Jan. 14 in the jury assembly room of the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice. The panel will include Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and Wayne County Circuit Judges Timothy Kenny, Thomas Jackson, and Patricia Fresard. Retired Circuit Judge William J. Giovan will be the moderator. For more information, contact Mitzy Sharp Futro at (313) 961-6120 or msharpfutro@detroitlawyer.org.

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## Taking Stock

MALCOLM BERKO

### Microsoft 7 no investor's heaven

Dear Mr. Berko:

I've been following Microsoft since you panned the stock at \$33 in 2007. Now I'm thinking of investing \$15,000 and buying 500 shares. When you panned the stock in 2007, you said it didn't have any "sex appeal" and was "dependant on one product for most of its revenues." What do you think of the stock now that its highly advertised Windows 7 seems to be taking the world by storm? Please give me the straight scoop.

K.P., Kankakee, Ind.

Dear K.P.:

I used Windows 95 and it worked as fine as a Swiss watch for 10 years. A friend of mine has Windows 98. He has been using 98 for nearly a decade and is as happy as a hog on ice. How many Windows does the world need? Originally, Microsoft gave us Windows 3.1, then Windows 95, then Windows DUM, then Windows 98, then Windows 99, then Windows YUK, then Windows 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, then Windows XL, then Windows XXL, then Windows XLT, then Windows Vista and now Windows 7.

In a couple of years, Microsoft (MSFT — \$30.23) may come out with Windows 007, or Windows 666, ad nauseam. And for most of us common folks in the universe, not one of these systems is worth a bean more than the other. MSFT, like the automobile companies, plans on planned obsolescence to generate new revenues. This is a craven way to goose revenues and bamboozle dollars from an easily dupable public. And if the average Joe or Jane who uses 2000 thinks that 7 will make an important difference, they're dumber than a tick in a Mai Tai. Windows 7 is more sizzle than steak and most users who switch to 7 may be mighty disappointed.

MSFT expects to ship nearly 200 million copies of Windows 7 by the end of 2010 and there's wide expectation that 7 will drive a new boom in tech sales. Potential buyers will be told that 7 will make them more productive, more competitive and their system more secure.

Well, that's pure terradiddle,

trumpetry and twaddle. Basically, 200 million new 7 users will be driving the same Chevy, with essentially the same engine, tires, transmission, but a different grill and taillights. And the saccharin sweet hype on those TV commercials isn't all its hyped up to be. Frankly, I don't think 7 will do much for the price of MSFT's stock price and I doubt that the sales of 7 will meet MSFT's expectations. Unemployment exceeds 17 percent (including those who have stopped looking) and consumers, who are responsible for 71 percent to 75 percent of our GDP, are now reluctant to buy things that they don't absolutely need. And most users need 7 as much as they need a migraine.

MSFT is not as powerful as it once was. Apple has a new, loyal customer group with its iPod who, when they buy a new computer, will probably buy an Apple. And free online software (open source) such as Linux and Google's Android are becoming tough competitors. Cloud computing is becoming a disruptive force, and MSFT's revenues may be handicapped by the company's need to protect its legacy.

If you have any doubt about MSFT's stock price, take a peek at Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway portfolio. Bill Gates and Buffett are friends and as close as bark on a tree. However, there isn't a single MSFT share in the Berkshire Hathaway portfolio. Meanwhile, MSFT's revenues are not looking so hot. In 2008, revenues were \$60.4 billion; in 2009, the Street expects \$58.4 billion; and in 2010, the Street (when 7 sales are in full force) is thinking \$57.8 billion. And 2009 will be the first time in 20 years that MSFT has not increased its earnings. So if MSFT isn't good enough for Gates' bosom buddy, then it shouldn't be good enough for you.

Please address your financial questions to Malcolm Berko, P.O. Box 8303, Largo, FL 33775 or e-mail him at [mjberko@yahoo.com](mailto:mjberko@yahoo.com). Visit Creators Syndicate Web site at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com). © 2009 Creators Syndicate Inc.

## PROFILE:

### Tribute to have entertainment

From Page 1

daughter Kara Tertzag Lividini; son, Kyle, Wayne County Circuit Judges David J. Allen and Gregory D. Bill; Butler, Robert Cassar; Anthony S. Guerriero and Lance E. Mermel.

The Purple Sportcoat Award recipient is someone who best exemplifies Judge Tertzag's simple motto: Be prompt. Be prepared. Be polite. And, in parting, be well.

In a comment on Butler's blog, attorneybutler.net, announcing Judge Rashid as the first Purple Sportcoat Award recipient, Daniel Romano wrote, "Great selection to honor a great jurist and memorialize a great jurist!"

Kyle Tertzag added, "The legal profession now has its own version of the 'Master's' green jacket!"

And Butler concluded, "Let's have this tradition last as long."

The tribute dinner is planned to be an entirely social event with people enjoying each other's company and having a good time, which Judge Tertzag would have wished. The program will be short with entertainment provided by Kevin Sands, a premier Frank Sinatra tribute artist.

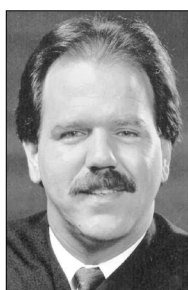
"Frank Sinatra was one of Chach's favorite singer," Butler said. "We will also end the evening by continuing the tradition started by Kaye's daughter Kara at the memorial service — Samba toast."

Daughter Kara, an attorney with Ford Motor Co., is flattered by the tribute being paid to her father.

"I am so touched that so many people have expressed such an interest in honoring my father," she said. "I am looking forward to giving a toast, as I did at his memorial, of hope and happiness, despite the sense of loss and sorrow we all feel from losing my Dad."

"I love the law, as he did, and I love our community, as he did. I can only hope to do his name justice in the upcoming years, with both my legal career, and my service to the community."

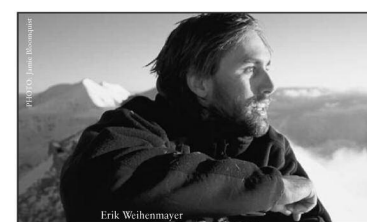
For more information or to reserve a seat at this inaugural event, call Butler at (734) 776-0231 or e-mail him at [mbutler@twmi.rr.com](mailto:mbutler@twmi.rr.com).



Judge James Rashid



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# Business & Economy

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

## Spectrum shortage

### Cell phone mania forces scramble for more airwaves

BY JOELLE TESSLER  
AP Technology Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Wireless devices such as Apple's iPhone are transforming the way we go online, making it possible to look up driving directions, find the nearest coffee shop and update Facebook on the go. All this has a price — in airwaves.

As mobile phones become more sophisticated, they transmit and receive more data over the airwaves. But the spectrum of wireless frequencies is finite — and devices like the iPhone are allowed to use only so much of it. TV and radio broadcasts, Wi-Fi networks and other communications services also use the airwaves. Each transmits on certain frequencies to avoid interference with others.

Now wireless phone companies fear they're in danger of running out of room, leaving congested networks that frustrate users and slow innovation. So the wireless companies want the government to give them bigger slices of airwaves — even if other users have to give up rights to theirs.

"Spectrum is the equivalent of our highways," says Christopher Guttman-McCabe, vice president of regulatory affairs for CTIA-The Wireless Association, an industry trade group. "That's how we move our traffic. And the volume of that traffic is increasing so dramatically that we need more lanes. We need more highways."

That won't happen without a fight. Wireless companies are eyeing some frequencies used by

TV broadcasters, satellite-communications companies and federal agencies such as the Pentagon. Already, some of those groups are pushing back.

That means tough choices are ahead. But one way or another, Washington will keep up with the exploding growth of the wireless market, insists Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va. He is sponsoring a bill that would mandate a government inventory of the airwaves to identify unused or underused bands that could be reallocated.

"It's not a question of whether we can find more spectrum," says Boucher, chairman of the House Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology and the Internet. "We have to find more spectrum."

CTIA, the industry group, is asking the government to make an additional 800 megahertz of the airwaves available for wireless companies to license over the next six years. That would be a huge expansion from the industry's current slice of roughly 500 megahertz. The Federal Communications Commission is preparing to make more frequencies available for commercial use, but has just 50 megahertz in the pipeline.

Two trends are driving the demand.

First, advanced new wireless applications — such as mobile

video and online games — devour far more bandwidth than voice calls or basic text messages, says Neville Ray, senior vice president for engineering operations for T-Mobile USA Inc.

Second, consumers are flocking to wireless Internet connections, in some cases dropping landline accounts altogether. ABI

plan, mandated by the 2009 stimulus bill, is due in February and will propose using wireless systems to bring high-speed Internet connections to corners of the country that are too remote for landline networks.

"If we are going to have a world-leading broadband infrastructure for the nation, wireless is an indispensable ingredient," says Genachowski aide Colin Crowell.

Lawrence Strickling, head of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the arm of the Commerce Department that manages the federal government's use of the airwaves, says the agency is also hunting for more frequencies the wireless industry can use.

Some of the crunch can be addressed with technologies that make more efficient use of airwaves and new equipment that lets users share bands. The FCC also wants to promote greater use of frequencies that aren't licensed to anyone, such as the "white spaces" between the bands used by TV channels.

But such solutions alone won't solve the crisis, the wireless industry warns.

The FCC's attention for now is on TV broadcasters, which hold nearly 300 megahertz of airwaves that are mainly used to serve just 10 percent of American homes —

those that still rely solely on over-the-air TV signals.

The FCC is exploring multiple options, most of which would leave broadcasters with enough capacity to deliver a high-definition signal over the air. One possibility, which might require congressional approval, is a voluntary program that would let broadcasters sell excess bandwidth through an auction, to either the government or directly to wireless companies. Although the FCC awarded spectrum licenses to broadcasters for free many years ago, those licenses are worth millions today.

"Fewer people are getting over-the-air TV and at the same time, more and more people are using mobile broadband," says Blair Levin, the official overseeing the FCC broadband plan. "So it only makes sense ... to get that asset into the hands of whomever can realize its greatest value."

The idea faces opposition from the powerful broadcast lobby. Dennis Wharton, executive vice president of the National Association of Broadcasters, says the proposal would stunt the industry's plans to make innovative use of the airwaves that became free when it turned off analog broadcasts and went entirely digital in June. Broadcasters have already returned more than 100 megahertz of those airwaves to the government and plan to use the rest to transmit high-definition signals, "multicast" multiple channels and deliver mobile TV to phones, laptops and cars.

"The FCC proposal would kill many of our future business plans in the cradle," Wharton says. Wireless carriers are also setting their sights on frequencies held by companies that deliver voice and data services through satellites.

Hedlund, of the Consumer Electronics Association, notes that some of these companies have a lot of bandwidth but not a lot of customers. TerreStar Corp., for one, launched its satellite in July and is just building a subscriber base. And ICO Global Communications, which is running tests on a satellite launched last year, has not announced when it will begin commercial service.

But TerreStar General Counsel Doug Brandon believes the company has a strong argument for keeping its airwaves: Satellites can provide a critical lifeline in emergencies when other communications links go down and in rural areas where other carriers don't offer service.

If anything, added ICO Vice President Christopher Doherty, satellite phone companies are ideal partners for cell phone companies that want to expand coverage. TerreStar, for one, has a deal for AT&T Inc. to resell the satellite service.

More potential sources of frequencies are federal agencies that handle everything from emergency communications to surveillance operations. The Defense Department, for instance, needs the airwaves for such critical equipment as radars, precision-guided weapons and drone planes.

The Pentagon has vacated some frequencies and is developing technology that can make more efficient use of airwaves. It also says it is committed to finding compromises that work for the government and commercial sector, so long as those don't jeopardize military capabilities.

Karl Nebbia, head of the NTIA's Office of Spectrum Management, points out that federal agencies may be open to moving to different bands because the government is "a huge user of commercial broadband services." But one challenge will be to ensure federal users get the resources to relocate — including new equipment, potentially paid for with spectrum auction proceeds.

For now, one thing everyone agrees is that there are no easy pickings in the airwaves.

"There is no open space anywhere," says Kathleen Ham, vice president of regulatory affairs for T-Mobile.

NEW YORK

## NBC-Comcast will be big power in sports Transformation will take shape over several years

BY RONALD BLUM  
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Except for the Olympics, the NBC peacock has largely faded from the forefront of the broadcast sports scene lately.

Now with the pending merger of NBC and Comcast, that figures to change — slowly.

A combined NBC-Comcast could compete for more NFL coverage, regain Major League Baseball and the NBA, and fight to maintain its exclusive deal for U.S. rights to the Olympics.

"I think this is a watershed deal in the history of the broadcast industry," said former CBS Sports president Neal Pilson, now a television consultant. "It's the biggest thing that's happened in my 40 years in broadcasting. No question."

When Comcast Corp. gains majority control in NBC Universal, it will meld NBC into a company that already owns 11 regional sports networks, The Golf Channel and Versus, and also has minority interests in the MLB Network and iNDemand.

NBC Sports chairman Dick Ebersol will transform from cash-starved executive back to a sports tycoon, backed with the monthly cash from Comcast's 24 million cable television subscribers.

"You're going to see a lot of money come into sports that's not been put in there by GE over the last few years," said former YES Network head Leo Hindery. "In recent years they have let everything pretty much drift away."

Ebersol will have the ability to compete for any sports rights that become available, making the new venture a likely competitor with ESPN, which is owned by The Walt Disney Co. Given the complexity of mergers and the timetable for rights to come back on the market, however, it will take years for the new entity to take shape.

"Look, I'm not going to talk about ESPN," Comcast chairman Brian Roberts said. "They have a fantastic business, and sports has proved to be a very profitable category. And almost in every space, there's more than one participant."

Ebersol and ESPN have declined comment on the merger, not wanting to say anything during the period of limbo between the Dec. 3 announcement and the closing, which needs shareholder and regulatory approval, a process that could take a year.

NBC was once a leader in sports television, but it hasn't televised baseball since 2000, the NBA since 2002 and NASCAR since 2006.

After losing its rights to the NFL's AFC package in 1998, it picked up the league's Sun-

day night deal starting in 2006 and rejoined the Super Bowl rotation. It also has televised the NHL since 2005-06, along with Versus, and has retained rights to Notre Dame home football games since 1991.

NBC also had a schedule of 26 golf tournaments this year, including the U.S. Open, and has held onto two tennis tournaments, televising Wimbledon since 1969 and the French Open since 1981.

The merger will put the NHL's national rights under one company.

"I think the potential is exciting for all hockey fans," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said. "In marketing, promotions, scheduling, from our standpoint these important relationships can only be a plus."

The combined company also owns a large swath of local broadcasting rights for teams through regional networks in Atlanta-Southeast; Boston-New England; Chicago; Houston-Southwest; Denver-Mountain West; New York; Philadelphia; Portland, Ore.-Pacific Northwest; the San Francisco Bay area; and Washington, D.C.

That in the future could lead to increased flexibility in shifting games between national and local coverage on shorter notice based on teams' success and popularity. That could start with the NHL and expand to other sports if NBC-Comcast gains national rights.

Right now, Versus (formerly the Outdoor Life Network) has a sparse number of wide-interest offerings, highlighted by the NHL and the Tour de France.

While NBC has pulled back from team sports, it has concentrated its money on the Olympics, broadcasting every Summer Games since 1988 and every Winter Games since 2002.

For the 2008 Beijing Games, NBC's coverage spilled onto CNBC, MSNBC, USA, Universal HD, Oxygen, Telemundo and specialty channels dedicated to basketball and soccer. Following this deal, Ebersol will have an even broader array of networks to use, which could lead to bold bids to secure Olympics rights for 2014 and 2016 when the International Olympic Committee sells them next year.

It could be particularly beneficial to The Golf Channel, with the IOC adding that sport to the program for the 2016 Rio Games.

And it could revive the U.S. Olympic Committee's plans for its own network, which was to be launched with Comcast. Opposition from NBC and the IOC caused the USOC to pull back last August — NBC and its Universal Sports carry most key events from the high-profile Olympic sports and did not want competition.

Because of the high startup cost, Pilson

doesn't think NBC-Comcast will try to compete with ESPN's sports news coverage or its dominating regular-season coverage in the two prime NCAA sports, football and basketball.

"I don't think you're going to see Versus with a SportsCenter," he said. "I don't think Versus is going to be chasing 300, 400 college basketball games, 100 or more college football games."

So where will the competition be? "The big events: the Olympics, the BCS, possibly try to get back into baseball and perhaps try to secure a second package with the NFL," he said.

That could take a long time. The NFL's contracts with CBS, NBC, FOX and ESPN all expire after the 2013 season, the same year that baseball's national deals with FOX and TBS run out. ESPN has rights to all Bowl Championship Series games from January 2011 through January 2014, and CBS's 11-year deal to televise the NCAA basketball tournament runs through 2014. The NBA's contracts with ABC and Turner run through the 2015-16 season.

Given the base of its regional sports networks, NBC-Comcast figures to get into the business of online local sports news, which ESPN is starting in Boston, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles. But don't expect NBC-Comcast to compete internationally with ESPN, which operates networks in Asia, Australia, Brazil, Europe, Latin America and the United Kingdom.

Ebersol probably will play the lead role for the new sports television giant.

"I think it's fair to say that when you think of sports on a national or global scale, it's hard not to think of NBC Sports and Dick Ebersol," Roberts said. "And the ability to have those regional sports businesses combine with NBC Sports and Versus and put it all together, whether it's backdrop or new games or new programming, I think those businesses belong together."

Hindery, currently managing partner of the investment group InterMedia Partners, expects the combined operation to focus on high-profile events, including additional NFL rights.

"They're going to be interested in anything that stretches over lengthy periods of time, so the longer the season, the more the interest," he said. "That's the nature of the cable distribution — or the cable format vs. broadcast. Broadcast does a great job with single event or limited event programming. Cable does a much better job with season-long sorts of offerings."

AP Sports Writer Rachel Cohen contributed to this report.