SUPPORT TV CHOICE

Did you know that people in Southern Arkansas are forced to watch Louisiana TV stations? And did you know that a majority of the counties in Wyoming can't even get Wyoming TV? These are not isolated cases. In fact, 45 states currently have similar situations where consumers are required by law to get out-of-state TV signals.

The Satellite Home Viewer Extension and Reauthorization Act (SHVERA), which is must-pass legislation this year, provides an excellent opportunity to correct this anomaly. Yet the broadcasters who benefit from this outdated model are resisting change, arguing that it will hurt their bottom lines. Here's the bottom line for consumers: Greater TV choice gives consumers the TV channels they want to watch along with the local news and weather they deserve to get.

Don't let the broadcasters continue to hold TV viewers hostage. Learn the facts. Support TV choice in this year's SHVERA.

MYTH: Consumers have a choice of local channels.

Broadcasters say that today, satellite carriers can provide all consumers with in-state programming without changing the law.

FACT: Consumers must take what they are given.

Consumers can generally receive signals only from within their "designated market area," which is a Nielsen construct used to measuring advertising. For some consumers, these are their in-state channels. For many others, they are not. But no consumer has a real choice.

MYTH: Blacking out network programming is a solution.

Broadcasters say that the solution is to allow satellite providers to show purely local content, but require that all other network programming be blacked out "swiss cheese" style -- *i.e.*, impose "non-duplication" rules for adjacent market signals.

FACT: Blacked out channels are neither practical nor consumer friendly.

Satellite TV companies have a national footprint. They cannot easily black out select content in a piecemeal manner on a daily basis from hundreds of local TV stations with hundreds of different schedules covering multiple time zones. Unlike cable systems, today's satellite infrastructure does not allow for filling in blacked out portions of the channel with alternative content. Furthermore, call center records indicate that consumers do not like it when channels are blacked out on their screens.

MYTH: Local broadcasters will be driven out of business.

Broadcasters say that Congress is being asked to provide in-state TV signals for "free" – *i.e.*, without compensating broadcasters – which will drive local television stations out of business.

FACT: Local broadcasters would receive MORE compensation…and they need it.

Payment for content on fair and equitable terms is presumed by the proposed legislation. In fact, satellite and cable companies would pay broadcasters to deliver signals where they weren't allowed to do so before – adding a new revenue stream, which could help bolster local news production.

During the last reauthorization in 2004, Congress granted satellite companies the right to import adjacent market signals into four states (Vermont, New Hampshire, Mississippi, and Oregon). None of the broadcasters in those states went out of business; the change in law did not produce the "doom and gloom" scenario predicted by the broadcast community.

MYTH: Broadcasters would lose bargaining position.

Broadcasters argue that in-state DMA reform would undermine the bargaining position of local television stations.

FACT: Broadcasters would retain their advantageous bargaining position.

This is not "back door" attempt to reform retransmission consent. By limiting DMA reform to stranded counties (rather than entire DMAs), the broadcasters have already succeeded in ensuring that they maintain their leverage over satellite carriers in retransmission consent negotiations.

MYTH: Current local markets make geographic sense.

Broadcasters argue that a consumer's "local" network affiliate is geographically closer and more relevant for weather and emergency information, even if it is out-of-state.

FACT: Many consumers live closer to a neighboring market.

For countless consumers, this is inaccurate. Residents of Esmeralda County, Nevada reside 249 miles from their out-of-state "local" news in Los Angeles. Residents of Campbell County, Wyoming reside 339 miles from their out-of-state "local" news in Denver.

Providing consumers with both stations offers them a complementary service, which is a win-win for everyone, including local broadcasters.

TV choice…the time has come.