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July 18, 1994

William F. Caton
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Rm. 222
Washington, DC 20554

Dear William Caton:

This letter is written in support of the Comments of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) in the matter concerning the implementation of Section 19 of the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, Annual Assessment of the Status of Competition in the Market for the Delivery of Video Programming, CS Docket No. 94-48.

Tri-County Electric is a rural electric utility company, and a NRTC member whose service area includes largely rural areas which are not serviced by cable. These rural families have little choice other than satellite for receiving cable television programming. Tri-County Electric is helping to provide satellite television programming to these consumers.

Currently, Tri-County Electric is forced to pay more for access to popular cable and broadcast programming than cable companies of comparable size in our area. These inflated rates in turn forces us to charge a higher rate to consumers for our service. This fact, on top of equipment costs, has contributed to many people not joining the age of satellite television.

It was my impression that, in the 1992 Cable Act, Congress had mandated that all distributors should be granted equal access to cable and broadcast programming services at non-discriminatory rates. If so, why are the cable companies in our area receiving programming at lower rates than us?

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We will be unable to offer satellite television at prices acceptable to rural consumers unless fair and equal access to *all* programming is available. In that regard, Tri-County Electric Cooperative joins NRTC in calling on the FCC to monitor and combat the problems that I have mentioned above and to ensure that the intentions of Congress are being upheld with regard to the 1992 Cable Act.

Specifically, I feel that the FCC must prohibit abuses of the program access provisions of the 1992 Cable Act by rule and make it clear that damages will be awarded for program access violations. The FCC is starting to help cabled customers by lowering their costs; please help the satellite customers by implementing the provisions to lower their costs.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,

R. W. Matheny

Robert Matheny
General Manager