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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

August 10, 1994

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

The Honorable Reed E. Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W., Room 814
Washington, D.C. 20054

RE: MM Docket 92-259

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to urge you to support open competition in the field of telecommunications by preventing cable companies from unfairly blocking VBIs on the Public Broadcasting System's signals.

A company in San Francisco's East Bay, StarSight Telecast, recently launched its new and innovative electronic television consumer service which utilizes Public Broadcasting Service's (PBS) vertical blanking interval (VBI). Unfortunately, it is my understanding that Time Warner has stripped StarSight's service from PBS's VBI in both Houston and Manhattan. I am concerned that the FCC is allowing cable operators to determine that they "own" the cable wire, thereby controlling all data and programming on that wire.

StarSight's service is the first interactive road map on the new information superhighway. It has theme categories for the hearing impaired and is the only carrier of information for parents on PBS's daily "Read to Learn" program. The service also allows parents block out unwanted programming over a week's period of time. Additionally, StarSight provides income to local PBS stations carrying its service. Blocking StarSight will preclude customers from accessing these valuable services and will destroy more than 100 jobs in the Bay Area.

I urge you to promote fair and open competition by freeing PBS's signal. It would be anathema to the goals of the Cable Act to allow cable operators to strip the StarSight service from signals which must be carried under current law. Thank you for your attention to my concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bill Baker

Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Ed Markey
The Honorable Carlos Moorhead

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