

American consumers pay an average of \$231 per year to rent a set top box from the cable monopolies. This hurts competition, limits consumer choice, and lifts up cable profits.

In 1968 the Federal Communications Commission issued the Carterfone ruling freeing up the telephone equipment business from AT&T by allowing customer owned equipment to be connected to the phone network provided they do not harm the phone system. This ruling should extend to other markets like the set top box market for pay TV.

In the 1990s Congress directed the Commission to require cable TV companies to setup an interoperable standard for consumer electronics companies interested in selling TV equipment to be able to pickup cable TV signals and relay them to TVs using their own devices. This led to the culmination of the CableCARD technology. Unfortunately, satellite TV providers were never required to participate with CableCARD and the CableCARD ended up being a flop. The cable TV industry did all it could to undermine the CableCARD technology and the Commission looked the other way. A few years ago discussion on a replacement technology AllVID began but the proposal up till now has never been implemented.

The Commission should adopt new rules requiring the set top box market be opened up to competitors. Consumers should have the power to choose their own device. Competition will lower prices and increase access to new streaming content and diverse voices.

Cable companies shouldn't be able to block what consumers see on their TV. I urge the FCC and Congress to Unlock The Box.