

Comments on NTA rural translator proposal:

Skyway Television has applied for and installed tv translators for local entities in small communities in eastern Montana since 1958. There was no other tv service available to many communities.

Now, even with satellite, fiber optic, and "wireless" there is yet a critical need for over-the air reception via translators in many rural areas. Comments that rural America can be better served by other means are out of touch with the realities of cost and distance.

Even though hundreds of channels are available by satellite, dozens of communities in eastern Montana and elsewhere want to upgrade or expand the tv translators that they have been relying on for decades. Better translator technology is available. Converting to UHF often expands coverage and improves quality, incidentally making possible much smaller antennas on the home. Expanded program sources are available, both network and otherwise. Existing user tax districts are available to finance these improvements, still by far the closest means to "free" television.

Some of these improvements are being made under the existing filing window, but it has been a long, difficult, and uncertain course. We need to continue this type of local choice, serving local needs, whether by tv translators or small LPTV stations. Delays of five to seven or more years, if continued, will be a real detriment to true local control and development of rural television.

For these reasons we support the type of changes proposed by the National Translator Association.