

I am a consumer interested in protecting competition, innovation, and legitimate use of cable TV content, and I am writing to urge you to refuse requests for waivers of 47 CFR 76.1204(a)(1) by NCTA, Charter, Verizon, and all other cable providers. The FCC's "integration ban," which in effect requires cable companies to integrate CableCARDs into their own set-top boxes, remains good policy today.

Requiring cable companies to use CableCARD-based in their own set-top boxes is far more in the interest of technical quality and innovation, fair business practices, and more freedom and choices for consumers than allowing the companies to continue foisting bulky, proprietary hardware on the public.

It's been ten years since the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and cable companies have dragged their feet long enough on competitive alternatives to proprietary set-top boxes, thus hampering innovation and harming consumers. The "integration ban" will also help market competition prevent further restrictions on cable subscribers' ability to make legitimate use of recorded content.

By adopting content protection limits ("encoding rules") in docket no. 97-80, the Commission recognized the importance of allowing consumers to make certain uses of TV content, regardless of a particular cable provider's or copyright holder's wishes. With competition spurred on by the integration ban, consumers would have the freedom to choose the least restrictive cable-compatible device available. The CableCARD standard already prescribes restrictions that harm consumers by limiting non-infringing uses, and such restrictions will get even worse if cable providers' set-top boxes are unchecked by competition.

Please refuse requests for waivers of 47 CFR 76.1204(a)(1).