

Now that Comcast and other cable television providers are ceasing analog transmission and requiring set-top boxes, I think it is high time to revisit the issue of ala carte channel pricing. Clearly, the "technical problems" argument is now moot.

The corollary to this would be voiding the "must-carry" contracts that companies like Viacom force onto the cable companies. To clarify, I refer to the demand that if Comcast wants to offer MTV they must also offer VH1 or whatever else Viacom is trying to promote. While I acknowledge that this type of business-to-business interference may seem outside the mandate of the FCC, it all comes down to shifting the power of choice from huge media corporations to citizens.

Of course, the cable companies could still offer bundles of channels at a price of their choosing, and many people would likely choose this option instead of individual channels. Some price regulation would also be required to prevent exorbitant pricing of certain popular channels to induce people to "surrender" and select the bundle option.