

To Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski,
Commissioners Robert McDowell and Mignon Clyburn,

The Federal Communications Commission has the authority and the responsibility to protect television viewers from the growing threat of broadcaster blackouts. Outdated retransmission consent regulations today distort today's more competitive marketplace. Consumers are poorly served when broadcasters are allowed to withhold popular programming in negotiations with television service providers. Blackout brinkmanship has become all too common, and it is an abuse of the public trust. Television has changed. The time has come to review and revise the rules governing broadcast retransmission consent to prevent future abuse by programmers. The current regime on broadcast retransmission consent is ripe for abuse and has enabled both broadcast and cable TV networks to threaten to revoke access to popular programming if providers do not routinely agree to new price increases. If negotiations between providers and programmers break down programmers can pull their channels from the provider's lineup of available TV channels holding us all hostage to their demands.

Consumers are increasingly getting the short end of the stick having to pay more for less local content. That's right the big media companies are charging us more for being able to view their programming on television. However, at the same time we're paying more for entertainment we continue to receive less local content.

Did you know last year (2011) only 7% of Time Warner Cable's Video Revenues were counted toward the company's net income? The company paid forty one percent of customer's entertainment dollars to programmers and fifty two percent was paid to operate Time Warner Cable's business. Time Warner Cable and other service providers often fight to keep the fees they pay to programmers as low as possible because TV providers have to pass on these costs to their customers. One factor in the increasing cost of TV is bundling of channels. Basic cable TV has over 70 channels which most of us never watch and don't want to have to pay for or subsidize with our TV dollars.

Consumers should be able to pick and choose what TV channels they want to pay for and watch a la carte. Unfortunately cable and satellite TV providers are required to bundle channels by all the programmers. Even consumers of basic cable TV service have 70+ bundled channels most of which they may not even watch, thus increasing the price of TV. The Internet has allowed a la carte programming to finally become reality with consumers cutting the cord to watch TV via the Internet for less. However, the big cable companies unable to compete with a la carte video online seek to implement bandwidth caps on Internet users to discourage us from leaving. Our corporate gatekeepers to the Internet also seek to make the Internet like cable TV with hundreds of channels no one wants to watch with limited choices, and tiered menu options. ISP discrimination to protect old, outdated business models is wrong, its illegal and should not be tolerated whether its by big telecom or cable. With TV Everywhere they want to actually offer online TV to paying TV subscribers only. We need broadcast retransmission consent fixed and Net Neutrality protected.