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Re: Basic Service Tier Encryption, MB Docket No. 11-169

The FCC should NOT grant any waivers to members of the NCTA to encrypt basic cable channels

- Even if cable companies supply free equipment to existing customers, it puts added financial burden on consumers. Each of these boxes requires electricity, driving up the cost of electric bills. Each box requires a separate remote which, in turn, requires batteries. Even if cable companies provide one or two free converters, this would cover a home with more than two televisions. Each of those televisions would require a converter box or set top box that the cable company certainly would charge for.
- There are locations where televisions are used, but where converters or STBs would not be viable. In my kitchen, I have a television installed in the wall. There is no location available for an additional box, free or otherwise.
- Even if cable companies provide the boxes to consumers at no cost, it forces consumers to be locked into the cable companies' equipment. I use a Media Center-type application on my computer, which would be rendered obsolete if an additional box was required to do the decryption. I also have several QAM-only televisions that would lose features if they had converter boxes in front of them to do the tuning. I would lose favorite channels, previous channels and other functions that I paid for as part of my television set. Most converters do not support features such as closed captioning.
- Cable companies have a poor track record of providing things "free" to the customer. When the analog-to-digital change was made, RCN offered free boxes. But six months later they started to charge \$3.99 a month for those boxes. So "free" turned out to be "not-so-free" in short order.
- Over the air ATSC HD signals, while an option, are not available in my home. I am 50 miles from the broadcast antennas and cannot tune these signals. PEG channels are only available to me over the basic tier of cable service.
- It is anti-competitive. Cable companies operate as monopolies or duopolies in their service areas. They have no incentive to innovate. Think of the days when AT&T was the telephone system. Dial phones were the only devices available and no changes were made until the courts allowed competitive devices to be attached to the telephone network. Harming innovative companies like Hauppauge and Silicon Dust, which create products based on the availability of clear QAM, is not in the customers best interests.

- Alternative methods of decryption, such as cable cards, were vigorously fought by the cable companies. They made it as hard as possible to install without a technician, to force people to use cable company-provided equipment. I would like to have choice in the equipment I use.
- Ultimately the removal of unencrypted QAM will consolidate power in cable company hands and put the consumer at an even greater disadvantage. Do we really want to go back to the days when the telephone company owned your phone and controlled where it could be plugged in? I think not.

It is hard to see that encrypting cable signals is anything except an advantage for the cable companies. Consumers gain nothing. I respectfully ask that you reject this request to encrypt basic cable transmissions.

Sincerely,

/s/

Steve Gayner