

The FCC should strengthen program access rules or simply extend them again as is not weaken them. Without the program access rule which was part of the Cable Act of 1992 DirecTV and Dish Network would have never gotten off the ground, let alone newer entrants to the pay TV business like AT&T and Verizon. The deadline to extend, retire or modify the rule is October 5th. If the FCC does nothing the rule goes away, leaving cable companies free to cut exclusive programming deals for their networks or deny programming to other distributors altogether.

Programming that could be at risk of disappearing from cable systems, satellite services or the telco TV services (AT&T and Verizon) that don't own the programming or aren't willing to pony up whatever fees the owners ask, could be Comcast-owned SportsNet, MSNBC, CNBC or Cablevision's MSG. It's easy to see how having exclusive programming translates into a competitive advantage for the cable company pitching exclusive sports networks to the consumer, especially the avid sports fan that can't live without Knicks or Rangers games who would select a pay TV distributor based on sports.

The FCC has extended the existing rule in 2002 and 2007. We need it extended again.