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August 13, 2014

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Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

First, let me express my gratitude to you and the Commission for hearing the Rainbow PUSH Coalition on many critical media and telecommunications issues facing our nation during this time. I commend you for taking our concerns seriously on so many pressing issues, particularly those related to closing the digital divide and reducing the barriers to ownership for minority- and women-owned businesses. I submit this letter in support of preserving the sports blackout rule, an item currently on circulation at the Federal Communications Commission. While the likelihood of sports blackouts has been minimized over the years, Rainbow PUSH is sensitive to the concerns of local economies surrounding these stadiums where decreased ticket sales can potentially impact jobs and economic opportunities.

Rainbow PUSH has been publicly active in debates around sports equity and our work in this area has focused on equitable ownership of professional sports teams by African Americans and other people of color. Over the years, we have also monitored how the large, commercial sports franchises can contribute to jobs and economic development.

Established nearly 40 years ago, the FCC's sports blackout rule has ensured that professional sports can be viewed for free over the public airwaves, benefitting those without pay television options or Internet access. The sports blackout rule has also contributed to fully leased stadiums that, in turn, boost local jobs and revenues for those living and selling within the surrounding communities. In large urban areas, NFL stadiums tend to be located within communities where the unemployment rate is high and the need for jobs is even greater. Moreover, these businesses located within these communities look to the stadium as a source of sustained revenues.

While some may argue that the elimination of the sports blackout rule is simply an adjustment to the expanding video climate that allows for more sustainable media outlets, viewers that are not cable or other paid television subscribers should not bear the brunt of the harm, and stadiums should not be robbed of their value, especially in communities with some of the greatest economic needs.

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., Founder & President
Martin L. King, Chairman
www.rainbowpush.org

Honorable Tom Wheeler

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The Rainbow PUSH Coalition respectfully requests that the Commission think carefully about the impact of this rule's elimination on local economic development. While it appears that this rule is simply one that is outdated in the current ecosystem, we submit that there could be a disproportionate impact on the communities and residents that seek to work, and not simply watch an athletic event.

We welcome the opportunity to engage further on this issue and hope that your fellow Commissioners will similarly factor in our concerns as the agency is exploring its decision on this active matter. For further discussion, please feel free to contact Steven J. Smith, Director, Public Policy Institute and the Media & Telecommunications Project at 202-393-3913 or ssmith@rainbowpush.org. Again, thank you.

Sincerely,



Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.
Founder & President

cc: Commissioners Mignon Clyburn, Jessica Rosenworcel, Ajit Pai, Michael O'Reilly