



December 5, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Clyburn
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Doug Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Whip Clyburn, Minority Whip Scalise, Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairman Nadler, and Ranking Member Collins,

The Satellite Television Extension and Localism Reauthorization Act (STELAR) includes vital consumer protections that allow nearly 900,000 consumers to receive basic network programming from major broadcast networks like CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox through the distant signal license. Unless Congress acts, the law will sunset on December 31, 2019. As part of this process, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) introduced H.R. 5140, the Satellite Television Community Protection and Promotion Act of 2019. Unfortunately, this bill fails to build on the original intentions of STELAR to serve otherwise unserved customers. Instead, the bill attempts to improve local service to viewers but could have the opposite effect.

H.R. 5140 would allow the distant signal license to expire after just six short months in certain markets for certain customers, based solely on the company providing them services. The expiration places hundreds of thousands of consumers at risk of losing access to national broadcast TV programming. These consumers are largely in rural areas and rely on satellite because they have been left behind – such as in short markets, in which broadcasters do not provide local network programming, and in areas where broadcasters have failed to provide an over-the-air signal. Given the current offerings of the two satellite providers, consumers in these markets will either have to go without certain broadcast network television, or seek programming from DISH, the only provider this legislation would currently permit to serve satellite customers using distant signals. Creating a virtual monopoly for one company for certain customers does nothing to protect consumers.

The bill also fails to reform the existing retransmission consent regime, leaving consumers even more vulnerable. Broadcasters, who have a local monopoly on nationwide content, continue to charge higher and higher retransmission fees at the expense of consumers. These fees have cost television providers and their consumers \$11.7 billion in 2019, a 5,000 percent increase from 2006. When agreements are not reached, consumers experience mass-channel blackouts. There have been more than 230 television blackouts this year, making this the worst year for blackouts on record.

Reauthorization of STELAR should be an opportunity for Congress to take a fresh look at the video marketplace and strengthen current consumer protections. H.R. 5140 does not achieve this goal. It does not protect consumers or foster a healthy video marketplace.

We hope you will stand with us and reject H.R. 5140, the Satellite Television Community Protection and Promotion Act of 2019.

Sincerely,

Tom Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Jenna Leventoff
Senior Policy Counsel
Public Knowledge

CC: U.S. House of Representatives