

BRIAN HIGGINS
27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
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January 18, 2012

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Chairman Genachowski,

I write to offer my support for eliminating blackout provisions that govern the broadcasting of National Football League (NFL) games. My community is home to the Buffalo Bills which has one of the longest histories in professional football dating back to 1960 when the Bills became a charter member of the American Football League (AFL) and later joined the National Football League as a charter member in 1970. Western New York has embraced and supported this franchise since its creation and it continues to be an integral part of the New York State economy.

The current rules that govern blacking out local broadcasting of Bills games affect Western New York negatively. Especially during this severe recession it is difficult for fans in my district to afford tickets to an NFL game. Families have had to cut back and the blackout rule denies those in my community from being able to merely watch the team they have supported through their investments of time, consumer spending, and local tax dollars.

As one of the largest stadiums in the National Football League, Ralph Wilson Stadium has seating for over 73,000. The blackout rules require that the stadium be sold out in order to broadcast the game locally. The league average for attendance last year was 67,000. This requires the Bills to sell 6,000 more tickets than the average team in one of the League's smaller communities just to be shown on local television, and do so 72 hours before the game. I do not believe this is fair to the people of my community and these rules have set a national mandate rather than an individualized solution to local markets. The NFL should not punish my community of Western New York merely because of the size of the stadium.

Last year the Buffalo Bills were subject to 3 blackouts. The Bills only played 7 home games this year and denying fans from viewing almost half of them is unacceptable. My community deserves a level playing field for the broadcasting of local sports teams. I urge that the Federal

Communications Commission take a more aggressive stance on eliminating these inequalities that disproportionately hurt Western New York.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Higgins", written over the printed name.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress