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February 18, 2014

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, O'Rielly, Pai, and Rosenworcel:

I applaud the Commission's unanimous December 18, 2013 decision to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to eliminate the FCC's sports blackout rules, which prohibit certain multichannel video programming distributors from retransmitting the signal of a distant broadcast station carrying a live sporting event if the event is not available, live, on a local television broadcast station.

The NPRM recognizes the fact that the sports blackout rule is outdated, and that the Commission has the legal authority to eliminate this rule without Congressional action. As the Commission noted "Changes in the sports industry in the last four decades have called into question whether the sports blackout rules remain necessary to ensure the overall availability of sports programming to the general public."

Further, the authority to repeal the sports blackout rule is authorized by the Communications Act, which grants the Commission general rulemaking power, including the authority to revisit

Further, the authority to repeal the sports blackout rule is authorized by the Communications Act, which grants the Commission general rulemaking power, including the authority to revisit its rules to modify or repeal them, when it concludes such action can be deemed necessary or appropriate.

Sports fans make significant financial investments in their home teams through local, county, and other taxes, and they should not be denied the opportunity to view their hometown team on television. I thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to finally ending the federal role in this unfair practice.

Sincerely,


BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress