

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2013

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I would like to thank the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for reexamining its current blackout rules for National Football League (NFL) games. The blackout rule is an outdated vestige, and I ask that the FCC strongly consider revising this rule.

When the NFL blackout policy was adopted roughly 40 years ago, NFL franchises were concerned that broadcasting local games would hinder attendance and gameday revenue. But the economic realities for teams and their fans have changed drastically since 1973. Meanwhile, the National Football League is the most profitable sports league in the world. This season, the average game has attracted 16.8 million viewers, and 19 of the 20 most watched television programs have been NFL games. But every season, blackouts keep fans across the country from watching their home team.

According to media reports, in the 2012 season, television contracts brought in double the revenue of ticket sales and contributed substantially to teams' average \$1.1 billion worth. Just as teams are making more from their broadcasts, attending games has become less affordable for local fans. The average NFL ticket now costs \$82, an increase of 3% over the 2012 season and more than double 1993 ticket prices.

In July 2012, I wrote to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell asking the League to revise its blackout policy. As you know, the NFL continues blackouts of games in a team's home market when ticket sales do not meet a set threshold 72 hours before the game begins. Yet, due to the League's popularity among fans, the blackout only affected 15 games last season. While the effect on those fans is great, the blackout's impact on League finances is small.

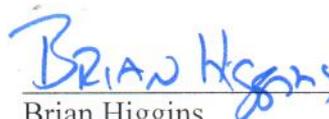
Sports fans make significant financial investments in their home teams through local, county, and other taxes and should not be denied access to a local game because they cannot afford tickets. As the FCC considers revising the current blackout policies, it should carefully weigh the economics of game attendance for sports fans and the changing financial interests of professional sports teams.

The current blackout policy does not serve taxpayers, sports fans, or networks. I urge the FCC to act immediately to ensure that sporting events remain accessible to millions of supportive fans.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress