

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

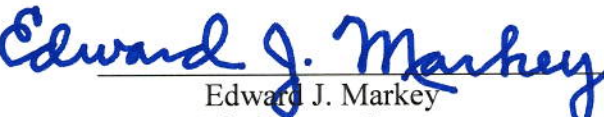
Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:


We write regarding our constituents' lack of access to local, in-state broadcast television programming. In the states that we represent, thousands of residents are currently unable to watch the news, sports, and entertainment that is most relevant to them. These viewers reside in "orphan counties," counties that fall into Designated Market Areas (DMAs) that are based in other states. In some cases, cable and satellite providers do not carry the out of market stations that our constituents want to watch, depriving them of important programming that affects their families and communities. As this Committee debates the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization (STELAR), we request that you work with us to implement remedies to help our constituents impacted in these orphan counties.

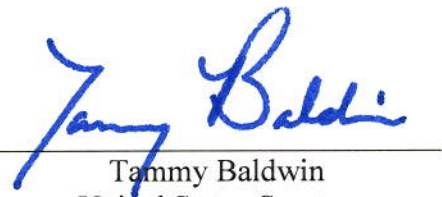
In Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Nebraska, thousands of consumers are unable to access in-state broadcast television stations, including residents in Western Massachusetts, the Nebraska Panhandle, and Northern and Western Wisconsin. Not only do our constituents lack access to local weather updates, news about their favorite teams and information regarding community events, residents are also unable to follow proceedings and lawmaking at their state houses. They are disconnected from in-state opportunities for civic engagement and they are deprived of key sources of news that uphold our informed citizenry and maintain a healthy democracy.

The Committee has worked to address orphan county issues in the past, and we encourage you to collaborate with us to identify and implement new, effective solutions to the situations in the states we represent. All Americans deserve access to local broadcast television content that is relevant to them. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Deb Fischer
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator