



Don't Let TV Station Moves Leave Viewers and Listeners in the Dark

NOVEMBER 2017

The issue:

Congress should pass the Viewer and Listener Protection Act to ensure their constituents do not lose access to local stations when they are required to move to new frequencies in the coming year.

Here's why:

By law, nearly 1,000 local stations across the country are moving to new channel frequencies due to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) broadcast spectrum incentive auction. This auction reallocated broadcast airwaves for wireless broadband services. This impacts your constituents who watch their local channels over the air with an antenna – 77 million Americans nationwide. These viewers will need to rescan their TV sets at the appropriate times to continue watching TV for free. Some TV stations have already gone off the air entirely.

Congress assured TV broadcasters that they would not be penalized if they chose not to participate in the auction. To that end, Congress authorized a \$1.75 billion relocation fund to cover the costs necessary to move stations to new frequencies to make room for wireless carriers after the auction. These moves are likely to cost significantly more and take much longer than envisioned by Congress. Costs are currently estimated to exceed the fund by hundreds of millions of dollars. The FCC also imposed an arbitrary 39-month deadline by which local TV stations must complete their moves or go off the air, which could leave your constituents without access to critical information.

This timeline is problematic because there are few crews qualified to modify broadcast towers, antennas and transmission lines and a shortage of antennas available for purchase. Further complicating this process, many radio stations that share towers with moving TV stations must go off the air for a period of time while the work is completed, jeopardizing listeners' access to these stations.

Your constituents should not lose access to emergency information local broadcast stations provide due to arbitrary and unachievable deadlines set by the FCC, nor should stations be left to foot the bill for hundreds of millions of dollars simply because the Commission could not adhere to its congressionally-set budget.

Sens. Jerry Moran (KS) and Brian Schatz (HI) introduced the bipartisan Viewer and Listener Protection Act to ensure their constituents do not lose access to local television and radio stations during these mandated frequency moves due to a lack of funds or unreasonable time constraints. House Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (NJ-06) and 10 cosponsors have also introduced a similar version of the bill in the House. Broadcasters are urging members of Congress to support the Viewer and Listener Protection Act (S. 1632 and H.R. 3347, respectively) to protect viewers and listeners from harm. For more information and to see how your district will be impacted, visit nab.org/TVStationMoves.