



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

SEPTEMBER 2017

The issue:

Congress should pass the Viewer and Listener Protection Act to ensure their constituents do not lose access to local stations during the government-mandated TV station moves taking place 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) recent 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. These viewers will need to rescan their TV sets at the appropriate times to continue watching TV for free. Some TV stations may go off the air entirely as early as this fall, impacting viewers.

Congress assured TV broadcasters that participation in the auction was voluntary and non-participating stations would not be penalized. To that end, Congress authorized a \$1.75 billion Television Broadcaster Relocation Fund to cover the costs necessary to move stations to new channels to make room for wireless carriers after the auction. Station moves are likely to cost significantly more and take much longer than envisioned by Congress. In fact, 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, leaving your constituents without access to critical information.

This timeline is problematic because there are a small number of qualified crews available for modifying 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 their local broadcast stations 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 by TV stations moving to new frequencies, visit nab.org/TVStationMoves.