

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 2019

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger R. Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20510

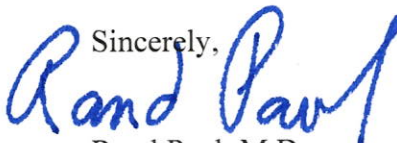
Dear Chairmen Graham and Wicker, and Ranking Members Feinstein and Cantwell:

I understand that many of my constituents in Kentucky do not have access to their local broadcast channels because satellite companies are permitted to import “distant signals” pursuant to the STELA Reauthorization (STELAR) Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-200). These distant signals are provided to cable and satellite companies at a government rate far below the rate of local channels, which are negotiated between the broadcasters and the multichannel video programming distributors. Kentuckians deserve and need access to local broadcasts to be informed of current events, weather, and emergency information.

STELAR, which will sunset at the end of 2019, is an obsolete law whose rationale for existence no longer exists. When the distant signal license was enacted into law thirty years ago, its purpose was to allow fledgling satellite companies the ability to compete with cable companies and to compensate for technological limitations that made carrying local broadcast stations impossible in certain parts of the country. Today, with the satellite industry fully developed and the improvements in signal technology, there is no policy rationale for government intervention in the market to continue to prop up one competitor over another, nor is there any technological reason for a segment of the country to remain unserved by their local television broadcasters. Consequently, we should allow STELAR to expire.

As your Committees deliberate whether STELAR’s distant signal statutory license provisions should sunset, I would like to express my firm belief that this license has not only outlived its usefulness, but also provides what amounts to a government subsidy for corporations that have no compelling reason to receive them and come at a significant cost to my constituents who are unable to receive local broadcasts. I ask you to simply allow STELAR to expire.

Sincerely,



Rand Paul, M.D.
United States Senator