

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of:)
)
Sports Broadcasting Practices and) MB Docket No. 26-45
Marketplace Developments)
)

**COMMENTS OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS**

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The National Association of Broadcasters¹ commends the Commission for asking critical and timely questions on “the current and emerging trends in the distribution of live sports programming,” and how “the present marketplace benefit[s] or harm[s] consumers.”² From the viewer’s standpoint, there is no question that a model that once served both sports leagues and viewers is now underserving the average fan. Global streaming behemoths like Amazon Prime, Alphabet (Google/YouTube), Apple, and Netflix, able to use live sports programming as a loss leader, have restricted access to sports programming using multiple paywalls, effectively forcing fans to use Gantt charts to locate their favorite team on television while being forced to subscribe to multiple services to do so. Watching

¹ NAB is the nonprofit trade association that advocates on behalf of free local radio and television stations and broadcast networks before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission and other federal agencies, and the courts.

² *FCC’s Media Bureau Seeks Comment on Sports Broadcasting Practices and Marketplace Developments*, Public Notice, MB Docket No. 26-45, at 1 (Feb. 25, 2026) (Public Notice or Notice).

televised sports has morphed from being an experience that bound us together to a maddening one that hurts the entire video ecosystem.

NAB believes it is time for the government to examine the relationship between existing statutes and rules, including the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 (SBA),³ and the ability of fans to access their favorite teams and sporting events with regional and nationwide appeal. Sports leagues and teams are subsidized by local communities across the country, whether through stadium financing, exemptions from the antitrust laws, or even simply the hard-earned dollars of the average fan and the local and national brands that support them. Leaving leagues and teams to simply wall off consumers by considering only the highest bidder for media rights to televise live sports does not serve the public interest.

Live sports, like broadcasting, are fundamental to civic life. They bring communities together – regardless of background or economic status. That is perhaps why sports and broadcasting have shared a symbiotic relationship for decades. After all, viewers only need an antenna to access over-the-air television. Because of its deep connection with the local communities that it serves, broadcast television consistently delivers the largest audiences for massive sports businesses, like the National Football League (NFL). It is not hyperbole to say that live televised sports – and many of the ancillary businesses it enabled (e.g., merchandising) – would not be anywhere close to the attraction and profit generator they are today without broadcast TV.

Unfortunately, the recent trend of sports leagues moving live sports behind a multitude of paywalls has undermined these longstanding public benefits. The biggest games and hometown matchups should not be reserved only for those who can afford yet

³ 15 U.S.C. § 1291.

another subscription. Broadcast television remains the most widely available and consumer-friendly platform, ensuring fans can watch the teams and events they care about without facing new paywalls or added complexity. When sports air on broadcast television, more people watch. That broader reach strengthens existing fan engagement and creates additional fans, expands audience size and gives leagues and teams a powerful platform to connect with casual viewers as well as devoted fans. Broadcast remains unmatched in its ability to bring communities together around live events.

It is also important to recognize that keeping sports on broadcast stations also helps sustain local journalism. Live sports are one of the few kinds of programming that audiences still watch in real time at scale. That audience drives advertising revenue and viewer loyalty, which helps local stations invest in what they do best: trusted local journalism. When stations remain strong economically, they can continue covering city hall, school boards, elections, severe weather, and the stories that matter most in local communities. Keeping sports on broadcast TV helps preserve that local connection and reinforces the role stations play as trusted, always-available community institutions. Not a single pureplay streaming venture offers any of these public benefits.

The government may very well have a role to play as major sports leagues continue to rely on a special exception from Congress – the SBA – to maximize the incredible growth of live televised sports and to generate massive revenue for sports leagues and teams. The Commission in particular can play a meaningful role in the process by removing important barriers to TV broadcasters being able to compete on more equal footing with Big Tech’s and other pureplay global streaming services for sports rights.

Below, NAB first offers a brief history of the interrelated success of U.S. professional sports (particularly the NFL) and broadcast TV. We explain how the mutually beneficial

relationship has: (1) grown the popularity of the sports leagues to unimagined heights; (2) become a tent pole in the broadcast ecosystem (networks and affiliates alike) that enables community connectedness and fosters the growth of local and national journalism; and (3) benefited existing and potential fans and viewers generally who can access premiere sports events and their favorite teams free over-the-air.

NAB then explains how that balance is now in grave danger due to the rise of unregulated international streaming services. These services leverage their market dominance in other areas and their global footprints to bid up the rights for sports, skewing the marketplace. We highlight how, as a result: (1) fans are harmed by the lack of meaningful access to games; (2) teams ultimately suffer with lesser reach despite short-term financial payouts; and (3) the broadcast ecosystem is damaged, harming local communities by hampering broadcasters' ability to provide high quality localized content, including news and emergency information.

NAB's comments also note the unique challenges broadcast stations face in trying to compete with Big Tech's and other unregulated streaming services for the rights to televise games. While a number of local broadcast TV groups in recent years have found ways to bridge the gaps here and there with the demise of regional sports networks, significant barriers persist. In particular, broadcasters' lack of scale, their inability to transition to improved technology standards without government approval, and their competitors' ability to operate without regulation has led to a highly unequal playing field, all to the detriment of the American sports fan.

Finally, NAB addresses potential steps forward to combat today's increasingly anti-consumer landscape. Policymakers should convene experts to examine the SBA to determine whether it is still useful or whether it now indeed harms the American public. For

the FCC's part, moving forward swiftly to eliminate the antiquated national and local ownership rules that only apply to TV broadcasters is a start. A quick and efficient transition to the NextGen TV (ATSC 3.0) standard is another way to ensure TV broadcasters can innovate to best serve viewers with upgrades such as sports in 4K. Ensuring that broadcasters, like all other platforms, can encrypt content to prevent theft and ensure that sports leagues will continue to do business with TV broadcasters is essential.

Keeping sports on broadcast television matters because it preserves free and easy access for fans, delivers the widest reach for leagues and advertisers, and helps local stations fund the journalism and emergency coverage communities depend on every day. In a fragmented media marketplace, broadcast television remains the most trusted and most accessible platform for live sports and public service alike.

II. BROADCASTING'S REACH AND EASY ACCESSIBILITY HAS PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR PROFESSIONAL SPORTS, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

This section traces how broadcasting has long been a critical distribution channel for premier national sporting events as well as team-based local sports. Broadcasters provide access to a broad audience that attracts advertisers and allows communities to access sports for free over-the-air. This reach and easy accessibility continue to make broadcasting the most public- and team-friendly medium.

A. A Brief History of Sports on TV Demonstrates the Symbiotic Relationship Between Broadcasting and Sports Leagues

The NFL and other professional live sports and broadcast TV have built their shared success on a mutually beneficial relationship that stretches back nearly a hundred years. Since broadcast TV hosted its first true U.S. sporting event – a college baseball game in 1939 – sports broadcasting has become an indispensable part of the growth and

development of major live sports after World War II when Americans started to purchase television sets en masse.⁴ At the end of the war, Americans owned approximately 7,000 TV sets and started purchasing sets at a rate of about 200,000 per month.⁵ By 1948, Americans owned more than a million TV sets.⁶ And that installed base only exploded from there. The number of Americans who owned first generation TVs ballooned from nine percent in the early 1950s to more than 80 percent by 1960.⁷ Color TVs also became common by the late 1960s.⁸

As more Americans acquired TV sets in the 1950s, broadcast TV began to play a vital role in the public's growing interest in live sports. This started with boxing. Broadcast TV stations started to air boxing matches multiple times per week; most notably, the famous *Gillette Cavalcade of Sports* Fridays on NBC, which typically featured boxing matches at Madison Square Garden.⁹ Broadcast TV helped make this program the sixth highest rated show on TV from 1950-51.¹⁰ The NCAA also entered deals in the 1950s to air college football games on broadcast TV, which ultimately led many major college football teams to

⁴ The Columbia vs. Princeton game on May 17, 1939, was the first true sports event on broadcast TV. Marc Horger, *The Big Game on the Small Screen: The Televised Transformation of Sport*, Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective (Nov. 2024).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ David J. Halberstam, *Broadcasting's 100th: Celebrating sports on TV from its beginnings after the war through today!*, Sports Broadcast Journal (Dec. 20, 2021).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Horger, *supra* note 4.

¹⁰ *1950-51 Top-Rated TV Shows*, Classic TV Database (accessed Mar. 26, 2026).

call for the NCAA to expand college football telecasts.¹¹ And of course, no league has benefited more from broadcast TV than the NFL.

As the U.S. market became saturated with TV sets by the late 1950s, NFL football began its rise as a fixture of American households' fall Sundays. Its gradual growth in popularity accelerated after the 1958 NFL Championship game between the Baltimore Colts and the New York Giants. That game, hailed as "The Best Football Game Ever Played," pulled in 45 million viewers – even with a blackout in the New York media market.¹² Recognizing the impact that broadcast TV had on the development of the NFL, the Pro Football Hall of Fame averred: "The [Colts-Giants] game captured the collective attention of the nation and as a result, pro football exploded across the country in the following years."¹³ More broadly, the NFL has observed:

Televised games fueled the dramatic increase in the NFL's popularity and profitability. Fans soon set aside time each week to watch their favorite teams play on Sundays. Games were eventually added to other days and moved to prime time. Television elevated the Super Bowl from sporting event to de facto national holiday.¹⁴

Longtime NFL executive and former Senior Advisor to the NFL Commissioner Joe Browne succinctly summed up this sentiment when he said, "Television has been the best marketing tool that we've had."¹⁵

¹¹ Horger, *supra* note 4.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Kerry J. Byrne, *On this day in history, December 28, 1958, Colts beat Giants for NFL title in 'greatest game ever played,'* Fox News (Dec. 28, 2023).

¹⁴ Nat'l Football League, Football Operations, *Impact of Television: How Television Has Changed the Game* (accessed March 26, 2026).

¹⁵ Joe Reedy, *A look at the seminal broadcasting moves that define the NFL*, The Associated Press (Aug. 23, 2019).

Likewise, live sports programming has attracted viewers to broadcast TV stations that ultimately helped grow station revenues and allowed them to provide additional localized content; not only sports but also news. Live sports on broadcast TV play a crucial role in the fabric of American life and local communities across the country. Local sports coverage on broadcast TV helps foster local pride and cohesiveness around local teams. Broadcast TV stations feature game highlights, host pre-game, post-game, and weekend recap shows, and conduct one-on-one interviews during pre-season, during practice, and before and after big games. Stations provide backstory features on athletes and cover charity events, youth clinics, and hospital visits. They create a whole ecosystem of entertainment designed to spur enthusiasm and loyalty to local sports teams and their athletes. And through those journalistic efforts to cover a locality's team, broadcasters fortify local communities in a way that serves the public interest.

B. Broadcast TV Provides Access to Broader Audiences, Which Attracts Advertisers and Provides the Most Equitable Access to Sports

Free over-the-air (OTA) broadcast TV is uniquely positioned to reach broad audiences, and broadcast stations time and again have shown that there is no better place to air live sports. Studies show that broadcast TV is still accessible to the largest number of domestic viewers.¹⁶ Despite the increasing movement of live sports to pureplay streaming platforms (discussed in further detail below), sports programming on broadcast TV draws significantly more viewers. For example, on Thanksgiving Day 2025, NFL games on broadcast TV shattered viewership records, averaging 44.7 million viewers across three games on CBS, Fox, and NBC, and with one of the games (Kansas City Chiefs-Dallas Cowboys) becoming the

¹⁶ George Winslow, *TVB: Broadcast/Cable Still Provides Widest Reach, Most Viewing Time*, TVTech (Jan. 31, 2024).

most watched regular season game on record, averaging 57.2 million viewers.¹⁷ In stark contrast, Amazon Prime's NFL game the next day, on Black Friday, averaged only 16.3 million viewers,¹⁸ and its Christmas Day game (featuring the Kansas City Chiefs again) averaged just 21.06 million.¹⁹

Sports beyond the NFL also amass substantially more viewers when aired on broadcast TV stations rather than on pay-walled platforms. For example, the men's NCAA basketball tournament final has garnered about 20 million viewers over past decade when aired on CBS but only about 16.5 million viewers when aired on the Turner cable networks (TNT/TBS/truTV).²⁰ Similarly, National Basketball Association (NBA) games on ABC and NBC combined are outdrawing games on Amazon by +137 percent (2.40 million vs. 1.01 million). Even the Bassmaster Classic, which recently aired on FOX, outdrew the NBA game on Amazon.²¹ In addition, National Hockey League (NHL) teams that have signed deals with broadcast TV station groups to replace their previous arrangements with cable regional sports networks (RSNs) have seen ratings skyrocket.²²

¹⁷ See Nat'l Football League, News Release, *2025 Thanksgiving Day NFL Games Shatter Viewership Records* (Dec. 3, 2025).

¹⁸ Eric Fisher, *Amazon's Black Friday NFL Audience Jumps to 16.3M Viewers*, Front Office Sports (Dec. 4, 2025).

¹⁹ See *Lions-Vikings Christmas game on Netflix sets NFL streaming record, averaging 27.5M viewers*, Associated Press (Dec. 31, 2025).

²⁰ NAB staff analysis of Nielsen data.

²¹ Michael Mulvihill (@mulvihill79), X (Mar. 18, 2026, at 11:12 AM ET), <https://x.com/mulvihill79/status/2034286728744497172>.

²² For example, Scripps signed a deal with the NHL's Vegas Golden Knights to carry all non-nationally exclusive games on its Las Vegas station, which doubled the ratings for the Golden Knights compared to its ratings on RSNs. Following a deal to air the NHL's Florida Panthers on a Scripps' station, the ratings for Panthers games rose 130 percent this year. See Glen Dickson, *Local Stations See Upside in Pro Sports, But It's Still Early Innings*, TVNewsCheck (Apr. 14, 2025) (also reporting that a broadcast station group that has deals with NBA teams including the Portland Trailblazers and Utah Jazz have seen their over-the-

Broadcast TV reaches entire communities rather than just targeted audience segments, which means advertisers can access communities across geographic and demographic lines.²³ Tellingly, some sports leagues are exploring whether to expand distribution of marquee events onto broadcast TV. For instance, in 2014, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) only aired 10 matches on broadcast TV. But for this year's World Cup, Fox has expanded the number of live games aired on broadcast TV to 70 matches.²⁴ Disney/ABC also secured flex scheduling for its *Monday Night Football* games, which allows Disney/ABC to flex in a high profile NFL match-up for Monday nights, so viewers can watch premium NFL games on both ABC-affiliated broadcast TV stations and on ESPN+.²⁵

The same goes for local team-based televised sports. Sports programming aired on one broadcaster's local TV stations has been estimated to reach audiences that were 250–300 percent larger than the regional sports networks they replaced.²⁶ Ratings for live games are often two-to-three times higher on broadcast TV than on RSNs.²⁷ Gray Media, for example, signed an agreement with the New Orleans Pelicans, which replaced RSN coverage only reaching about 250,000 households. The new deal provides free over-the-air

air broadcasts attract more viewers in the 25-54 demographic, compared to the over-55 viewers that had watched on RSNs).

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Paul Tenorio, *Fox Releases World Cup broadcast schedule, will set record for games on network TV*, *The Athletic* (Feb. 7, 2026).

²⁵ Michael McCarthy, *Disney is the Big Winner of NFL's TV Deals*, *Front Office Sports* (Mar. 27, 2026).

²⁶ Rick Young, *Local News & Sports Need To Be Everywhere, Just Like Viewers*, *TVNewsCheck* (Dec. 1, 2025).

²⁷ Stephen Battaglio, *Why sports are returning to free over-the-air TV*, *LA Times* (Oct. 11, 2023).

and affiliated multichannel video programming distributor (MVPD) coverage over a new Gulf Coast Sports & Entertainment Network that reaches 4.1 million households on stations throughout Louisiana, much of Mississippi, and Mobile, Alabama.²⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, Gray has grown the audience anywhere from three-to-five times higher when compared to previous periods.²⁹

As demonstrated above, for decades, premier sports events and team-focused local sports have benefitted greatly from their relationship with free, OTA TV. Fans have easy and affordable access to events that bring the nation and local communities together through broadcast TV. That model of enduring success, however, is now being threatened.

III. STREAMING HAS UPENDED THE ENTIRE SPORTS ECOSYSTEM TO THE DETRIMENT OF FANS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The dramatic rise of unregulated pureplay streaming services has chipped away at the mutually beneficial relationship between broadcasting and many sports leagues and their fans. These services leverage their global footprint and market dominance in areas unrelated to television to bid up the right for sports, causing damage to fans, teams, and local journalism.

One almost cannot go a week without experiencing or hearing about the frustration sports fans now endure in trying not only to pay for, *but even find* premier national and local team sports on TV.³⁰ What was once a predictable ecosystem where fans were able to easily

²⁸ Fred Dawson, *Local TV's Role in Pro Sports Flashes Real Staying Power*, TVTech (Apr. 1, 2025).

²⁹ Glen Dickson, *Local Stations See Upside in Pro Sports, But It's Still Early Innings*, TVNewsCheck (Apr.14, 2025).

³⁰ See, e.g., Fred Dawson, *Local TV's Role in Pro Sports Flashes Real Staying Power*, tvtechnology.com (Apr. 1, 2025). "The fragmentation of rights across multiple platforms

access their local teams' games and tune in to sports events of national importance is now a confusing labyrinth that fans struggle to follow. The world had already become less user-friendly for fans with the rise of regional sports networks, which charged a premium for fans to view their teams. But at least in those days – which are now rapidly disappearing – games and channels could be found on one system (if not on broadcast), whereas streaming has introduced a nightmare of unreasonably high bills and the need for a Ph.D. to figure out where to catch games. And while one would think that this state of affairs would discourage leagues and teams from adopting let alone encouraging that system, the ability of unregulated global streaming behemoths to outbid everyone else has presumably made it too hard to pass up.

The migration of live sports programming to Big Tech's and other pureplay streaming platforms is well documented. For example, every NFL game in the 2025 season was available on one streaming platform or another, and Amazon Prime (Thursday night games), Netflix (Christmas Day games), and YouTube, owned by Alphabet/Google (the opening game of the past season), had exclusive national rights to 20 regular season games.³¹ YouTubeTV is also the home of NFL Sunday Ticket. The NFL, moreover, now has moved to renegotiate its media rights several years early, leading analysts to wonder whether it will “transform how it presents games with streamers more heavily involved” and whether a streaming

creates friction for consumers while driving up costs.” *Id.* (quoting Jeremy Goldman, senior director at Emarketer).

³¹ Dominic Patten, *NFL Tackles Linear TV With Every Game Available Online This Season For First Time Ever*, *deadline.com* (Sept. 5, 2025). For the teams playing in any game, the corresponding local broadcast station for that market will air the game. See James Willcox, *How to Watch Every 2025-26 NFL Game*, *Consumer Reports* (Sept. 4, 2025); Jim Kimble, *How to Watch Live Sports for Free with a TV Antenna*, *Antenna Land* (Dec. 18, 2025).

service could “pick up a Super Bowl.”³² Beyond their NFL rights, Amazon is now the NBA’s third national partner, and Netflix has the rights to WWE’s “Raw,” exclusive U.S. rights to the FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2027 and 2031, and rights to live Major League Baseball (MLB) coverage, including opening night.³³ The NFL, NBA, and MLB also offer direct-to-consumer subscription streaming services. A recent analysis from Nielsen’s Gracenote found that sports program offerings across the top five subscription video on demand (SVOD) services jumped 52 percent year-over-year.³⁴

Consumers’ frustration is growing as a result. In a TiVo survey on video trends conducted in the fourth quarter of 2024, 58 percent of respondents reported being unable to watch specific sporting events due to lack of access through their subscribed services.³⁵ In the summer of 2025, a Hub Entertainment Research survey found that 53 percent of sports fans said it had gotten *more* confusing over the past year to find the sports they want to watch and 65 percent complained it was a hassle to be forced to use more than one

³² Dan Shanoff and Andrew Marchand, *Roger Goodell signals NFL’s interest in re-doing TV deals in 2026*, New York Times (Sept. 24, 2025); see also, e.g., Alex Sherman, *NFL plans to have discussions with partners outside of core media for live games, media chief says*, cnbc.com (Feb. 6, 2026).

³³ In addition, Apple TV+ streams all U.S. Major League Soccer games, is the official Formula 1 partner in the United States and exclusively offers MLB’s Friday Night Baseball doubleheaders. See *NBA signs new 11-year media agreements with the Walt Disney Company, NBCUniversal and Amazon Prime Video through 2035-36 season*, nba.com (July 24, 2024); Arif Islam, *Streaming platforms spent US \$10bn on sports rights in 2024*, SportsPro.com (Jan. 8, 2025); Phil Kurz, *MLB Strikes Rights Deals With ESPN, NBCUniversal, Netflix*, tvtechnology.com (Nov. 19, 2025); Jose Adorno, *Sports Are Driving Subscriptions Through 2025*, bgr.com (Dec. 2, 2025).

³⁴ George Winslow, *Study: Sports Programming on Major Streamers Up 52% YoY*, tvtechnology.com (Feb. 19, 2026).

³⁵ TVT Staff, *TiVo: Viewers Continue to Cut Back on Streaming Subscriptions*, tvtechnology.com (Apr. 29, 2025).

service to watch games during a season.³⁶ And by the beginning of 2026, Hub Entertainment Research found that 87 percent of sports fans were at least somewhat frustrated by the complexity of figuring out where to go to watch the sports they follow and a quarter of those surveyed said they felt very frustrated.³⁷

Because sports programming has migrated to multiple streaming (and cable/satellite) platforms, sports fans are now required to pay myriad subscriptions to receive the football (pro and college), baseball, basketball, hockey, and other sports they want to watch, which easily could total thousands of dollars per household. Various estimates of the cost just to stream all NFL games in the 2025 season approached or substantially exceeded \$1,000.³⁸ A “patchwork of expensive subscriptions, cable packages and password shares” are now common for sports fans who are “beholden to multiple platforms at a cost no one seems to like,” or “they choose instead to stop regularly watching a favorite sport or team.”³⁹

On the current trajectory, the costs to consumers wanting to watch live sports will only continue to increase. Just this week, Netflix announced that the company’s ad-supported plan is now \$8.99 a month, up from \$7.99; the standard plan is now \$19.99 a

³⁶ George Winslow, *Sports Is Streaming’s Content MVP, But Fan Frustration is Growing*, tvtechnology.com (Oct. 15, 2025).

³⁷ George Winslow, *Study: Overloaded Sports Fans Fed Up with Fragmented Viewing Options*, tvtechnology.com (Mar. 9, 2026) (discussing survey conducted in December 2025-January 2026).

³⁸ See Jacob Feldman, *It Will Cost \$935 To Stream Every NFL Game This Season*, sportico.com (Sept. 5, 2025); Public Notice at 4 (noting that NFL games alone aired on ten different services in 2025, which, according to some estimates, could cost a consumer over \$1,500 just to watch all NFL games).

³⁹ Maya Sweedler, *Many sports fans are unhappy with how much it costs to watch their games, an AP-NORC poll finds*, apnews.com (Sept. 16, 2025) (reporting on results of survey by Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research).

month, up from \$17.99; and its premium plan is now \$26.99, up from \$24.99.⁴⁰ Similarly, in August 2025, Apple TV+ increased its monthly subscription price by 30 percent, to \$12.99 a month, its third price increase in the last three years.⁴¹ In 2024, Amazon began charging an extra \$2.99 per month for an ad-free version of its Prime Video service, and starting on April 10, 2026, Amazon will hike the price of its ad-free tier by \$2 a month, bringing it to \$4.99.⁴² In light of the NFL's early renegotiation of its media rights this year, additional price hikes for consumers surely will follow sooner rather than later.⁴³

Unsurprisingly, consumers strongly prefer watching live sports on easily- and freely-accessible broadcast stations, rather than via a confusing array of different streaming and pay TV platforms, all requiring their own rising subscription fees. Broadcast outlets' loss of rights to some of the most highly valued content in the media marketplace has led to consumers' loss of access, both of which disserve the public interest. A survey report released last month found that 90 percent of sports enthusiasts believe it is important for local sports to be on local broadcast TV, and that for sports fans, linear TV remains the

⁴⁰ Todd Spangler, *Netflix Raising U.S. Prices for Second Time in Less Than Two Years*, variety.com (Mar. 26, 2026). At the beginning of 2025 – only months after eliminating its cheapest ad-free subscription – Netflix had raised the prices of its standard plan with ads to \$7.99 per month (up \$1.00), its ad-free standard plan to \$17.99 per month (a \$2.50 increase), and its premium plan to \$24.99 per month (up \$2.00). Manuela Lopez Restrepo, *Netflix raises monthly fees after a record jump in new subscribers*, npr.org (Jan. 22, 2025).

⁴¹ Todd Spangler, *Apple TV+ Hiking Price, Will Now Cost \$13 per Month in U.S.*, variety.com (Aug. 21, 2025).

⁴² Annie Palmer, *Amazon to hike price of ad-free Prime Video tier by \$2 a month*, cnbc.com (Mar. 13, 2026).

⁴³ See, e.g., Chuckie Burnette, *The NFL's 2026 Domestic Media Rights Will Hit Consumers*, packedhousesports.com (Mar. 4, 2026).

preferred way to view sports, including football, basketball, baseball, hockey, golf, soccer, auto racing, or tennis.⁴⁴

While competition is certainly positive in the video marketplace, the Big Tech streaming behemoths that are taking over the televised sports landscape do not merely compete but have the instant ability to dominate the sports rights marketplace. Unlike broadcast networks and local TV stations that invest in programming to serve their viewers, certain large streaming services can use live sports programming – or at least in one case even video services generally – as a loss leader to promote their other businesses. Amazon Prime Video is the “prime” example of how this is possible. For many, the ad-supported tier of Amazon’s streaming service is essentially free, included as part of the Amazon Prime rapid, free shipping service that promotes Amazon’s core online retail business.⁴⁵ And the premium ad-free Amazon Prime Video tier, even after the upcoming price increase, will cost only \$4.99 per month, well below Amazon’s costs in acquiring and producing the live sports and extensive entertainment programming it offers consumers.

In contrast, broadcasters’ core business is serving local communities with vital news and emergency information as well as free entertainment programming. TV broadcasters don’t have the luxury of offering live sports or any other valued video programming as a loss leader. Nor do broadcasters, unlike Alphabet, Amazon and Apple, have other business lines

⁴⁴ Survey: 90% say US local sports should be on local broadcast TV, Advanced Television (Feb. 12, 2026) (reporting on TVB’s 2026 Sports Survey).

⁴⁵ See Annie Palmer, *Amazon increases the price of Prime nearly 17% to \$139 per year*, cnbc.com (Feb. 3, 2022) (explaining that the Amazon Prime membership program remains one of the “biggest growth levers for Amazon’s core retail business,” and that Prime members spend much more on Amazon than non-Prime customers and shop more often).

that bring in tens of billions of dollars annually to subsidize the acquisition of live sports and other popular programming. This imbalance leaves sports fans out in the cold.

The once strong symbiosis between sports leagues, broadcasters, and fans is now strained and has the viewing public greatly concerned. Policymakers should be concerned too about the trajectory televised sports are taking, as pureplay streamers aim to replace broadcasting but never can when it comes to reach and affordability for American consumers.

IV. A STREAMING-FOCUSED SPORTS TV LANDSCAPE HARMS THE ENTIRE BROADCAST ECOSYSTEM

Live sports programming aired on broadcast TV helps support the public interest beyond simply making the games freely available. *First*, sports programming generates crucial revenues for TV stations that ultimately support local news operations. For instance, data from the fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023 showed that live sports programming during the NFL season accounted for almost 40 percent of all U.S. national TV ad spend, and the 2024 Olympics in Paris spiked ad spending from approximately 19 percent in the third quarter of 2023 to 31.2 percent in the third quarter of 2024.⁴⁶ In 2024, live sports represented 80 of the 100 most-watched U.S. broadcasts,⁴⁷ and broadcast TV's share of total TV viewing consistently increases in the fall with the return of football.⁴⁸ When

⁴⁶ Jennifer King, *Football spikes live sports TV ad spend annually in Q4*, EMarketer (Oct. 23, 2024).

⁴⁷ Arif Islam, *NFL dominates most-watched US TV broadcasts of 2024 but share of top 100 hit by election coverage*, SportsPro (Jan. 6, 2025).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Nielsen, *The Gauge*, June 2025 (rel. July 15, 2025) (showing that broadcast's share of all TV usage fell to 18.5 percent last June); Nielsen, *The Gauge: NFL Viewership Underscores How Sports Are Redefining Audience Behavior* (Nov. 2025) (reporting that broadcast's share of all TV usage reached 22.9 percent last October); Nielsen, *The Gauge*, November 2025 (rel. Dec. 16, 2025) (reporting that broadcast's share of all TV usage rose to 23.2 percent last November). "Sunday Night Football" was again the top-rated broadcast

comparing the first and last weeks of August 2025, viewing increased by 36 percent on Fox affiliates and 29 percent on ABC affiliates as a result of the start of the new football season.⁴⁹ Put simply, live sports play an outsized role in attracting audiences and generating ad revenues to broadcast TV, with 72 percent of surveyed fans stating that sports are “more important to them than anything else they watch on TV.”⁵⁰ Live sports are the lifeblood that broadcast stations rely upon to provide local news and other local programming.

Big Tech and pureplay streaming platforms, which provide no local content and do not serve the public interest, spend extraordinary sums for live sports programming, which in turn shifts sports content to paywalled services and siphons advertisers from broadcast TV stations.⁵¹ Their presence in the market also imposes further pressure on broadcast TV stations to exponentially increase payments to sports leagues and teams to air live sports.⁵² As broadcasters pay more for live sports, that further compresses the revenues that stations rely upon for local news. Yet without live sports, broadcast stations would lose much of their financial foundation for providing local news and other local programming. That’s why

TV program in the 2024-2025 television season and has been since the 2015-2016 season. See Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 89-90 (Dec. 17, 2025).

⁴⁹ Eric Gruenwedel, *Nielsen: Football Drives August TV Gains for Disney, Fox*, Media Play News (Sept. 23, 2025).

⁵⁰ George Winslow, *Sports Is Streaming Content’s MVP, But Fan Frustration is Growing*, tvtechnology.com (Oct. 15, 2025) (reporting on Hub Entertainment Research survey).

⁵¹ See Tom Sly, *Are We Happy With Where Broadcast TV is Today?* TVNewsCheck (Aug. 11, 2025) (“As live, linear viewership drops, so do advertising revenues.”).

⁵² Stephen Battaglio, *Broadcast television is in trouble. Stations are asking Washington for help*, LA Times (Apr. 8, 2025).

maintaining live sports coverage on broadcast TV is critical to ensuring local stations can continue to support the public interest.⁵³

Second, local TV stations provide a unique focus on local teams and local athletes. Local reporters also are better positioned to identify inspiring, positive stories involving local athletes. For example, KCBS/KCAL Sports Reporter Jaime Maggio reported on how Angel City Football Club defender, Savy King, uses her platform to provide free CPR training for the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) after she experienced a cardiac event on the field.⁵⁴

Local TV station coverage of high school sports are incredibly valuable to viewers and broadcasters. CW and MyNetworkTV affiliates, which broadcast local high school games, very often compete head-to-head with NFL and MLB games in certain local markets.⁵⁵ According to Comscore’s local TV data, college and high school football broadcasts either rival or outperform national telecasts in markets like Houston and San Antonio.⁵⁶ Local TV stations also provide highly localized sports content, such as hosting “Athlete of the Week” segments that showcase the success of young student athletes in the community.⁵⁷

⁵³ NAB has documented in detail the high costs of maintaining local news operations; the serious financial pressures that local TV stations now face in maintaining those operations; the increasingly questionable viability of many local news operations; and the inability of most local markets, recognized by the FCC, to support four (or even fewer) local news operations. See, e.g., Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 109-114 (Dec. 17, 2025); Written Ex Parte Communication of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 24-26 (Apr. 2, 2025).

⁵⁴ Derek Futterman, *The local sports anchoring and reporting playbook*, Sports Media Watch (Jan. 2026).

⁵⁵ Tara Gotch, *How Local Sports Fuel the Heartbeat of Fandom*, Comscore (Oct. 20, 2025).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ See, e.g., *Athlete of the Week*, ABC 12 News (accessed Mar. 27, 2026).

Lastly, sports programming often provides a powerful and even essential lead-in to local news coverage, which provides critical information about breaking news, weather, public safety, public policy, and community events.⁵⁸ Televising live sports often has a “spillover” effect, where advertisements shown during live sports events for other programming on that station, such as local news, may convince viewers to stay on the channel.⁵⁹ There is little doubt that broadcasting live sports can keep viewers engaged in the channel beyond just sporting events, which ultimately can ensure more viewers tune into local news and other local programming.⁶⁰

V. THE FCC CAN SUPPORT BROADCAST TV STATIONS IN PROVIDING SPORTS PROGRAMMING FREE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES BY MODERNIZING OUTDATED BROADCAST RULES THAT HURT LOCAL STATIONS

The NFL and other professional sports leagues operate under the cover of the SBA’s antitrust exemption,⁶¹ while they increasingly migrate premium live sports programming to Big Tech’s and other pureplay streaming platforms and extract exorbitant fees from each

⁵⁸ Adam Weiner, *An NFL Antitrust Debate May Determine Local Broadcasting’s Future*, TVNewsCheck (Mar. 9, 2026).

⁵⁹ Michael Mondello & John Fortunato, *The Economics of Sport Broadcasting* at 59, Sport Broadcasting for Managers (Hunter Fajak & Stephen Frawley Ed. 2022).

⁶⁰ See Glen Dickson, *Local Stations See Upside In Pro Sports, But It’s Still Early Innings*, TVNewsCheck (Apr. 14, 2025) (local broadcast TV group executive discussing “synergies” between sports and local news product, and stating that it is an impact “critical to understanding how beneficial professional sports could be for local TV news”); Fred Dawson, *Local TV’s Role in Pro Sports Flashes Real Staying Power*, tvtechnology.com (Apr. 1, 2025) (local broadcast TV group executive stating that the combination of live sports and local news is a “really good model”).

⁶¹ 15 U.S.C. § 1291 (“The antitrust laws, as defined in section 1 of the [Sherman] Act . . . shall not apply to any joint agreement by or among persons engaging in or conducting the organized professional team sports of football, baseball, basketball, or hockey, by which any league of clubs participating in professional football, baseball, basketball, or hockey contests sells or otherwise transfers all or any part of the rights of such league’s member clubs in the sponsored telecasting of the games of football, baseball, basketball, or hockey, as the case may be, engaged in or conducted by such clubs.”).

successive media rights deal with network programmers. Considering the professional sports leagues clear demonstration of leverage, policymakers should examine whether these leagues continue to require protection from the antitrust laws. And while policymakers rightly debate the continued need for the SBA, there are actions the FCC can take today to ease the troubling trend of sports programming becoming more fragmented, confusing, and walled off for fans. Most immediately, the Commission can modernize its decades-old national and local broadcast ownership rules and support the transition to the NextGen TV (ATSC 3.0) standard.

A. The FCC and Other Policymakers Should Take a Fresh Look at Whether the Sports Broadcasting Act Still Serves Its Purpose

The SBA was enacted over 60 years ago to undo a federal court injunction from an antitrust case that limited the NFL's ability to pool and sell telecast rights.⁶² As a result of the SBA, TV broadcasters and sports leagues developed a mutually beneficial relationship. The SBA eliminated antitrust exposure for professional sports leagues to league-wide telecast deals at a time when Americans were just starting to own televisions.⁶³ Consequently, the SBA helped expose nascent sports leagues to the American public just when broadcast TV was becoming ubiquitously accessible to households around the country.

⁶² H.R. Rep. No. 87-1178, at 29 (196) ("H.R. 9096 is needed to overrule the effect of a decision of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, issued July 20, 1961, in case of *United States v. National Football League*. In that decision, Judge Grim ruled that a 2-year contract between the National Football League and the Columbia Broadcasting System granting CBS the exclusive right to televise league games is prohibited by the final judgment entered in the same case (116 F. Supp. 319) in 1953, and by the antitrust laws. . . .The practical result of this decision is that the National Football League cannot enter into an agreement to sell the pooled television rights of its member clubs."); accord S. Rep. No. 87-1087, at 3042-43 (1961); see also *In re Nat'l Football League's Sunday Ticket Antitrust Litigation*, 933 F.3d 1136, 1145-46 (9th Cir. 2019).

⁶³ See *supra* Section II.

As discussed in Section II, live sports programming and broadcast TV stations developed a symbiotic relationship that facilitated the growth and popularity of professional sports leagues and served the public interest by supporting local news and other local programming.

Those quaint early days, however, are long past. Today, as discussed in Section III, the NFL and other sports leagues are increasingly moving live sports programming to streaming behemoths with tens of billions of dollars – often earned from their other technology, advertising, and retail businesses – to spend. And of course, these streaming services have no obligation – and make no effort – to support local communities. These streaming services are bidding outrageous sums to capture premium live sports programming all to the detriment of confused, frustrated consumers and broadcast TV stations that serve local communities.

Not only do professional sports leagues well understand this dynamic, they fully anticipate that the networks negotiating telecast rights likely will lose money on these deals. Dallas Cowboys Owner and member of the NFL Media Committee Jerry Jones has remarked: “[NFL games] shouldn't be something you make money off of if you're a network, we should be a loss-leader. . . .”⁶⁴ According to published reports, the NFL is considering reopening its negotiations with CBS to increase its annual fee from \$2.1 billion to \$3 billion.⁶⁵ The NBA also sold its telecast rights to Amazon (along with the Walt Disney Co. and NBCUniversal), and it overall increased the annual value of its media rights by 150 percent.⁶⁶ These

⁶⁴ Tommy Yarrish, *How Jerry Jones, a 14 hour meeting and I Love Lucy changed the NFL and TV forever*, DallasCowboys.com (Dec. 17, 2025).

⁶⁵ John Ourand, *Is Goodell Overplaying His Hand?* The Puck (Mar. 23, 2026).

⁶⁶ John Ourand, *The NFL Media Rights Industrial Complex*, The Puck (Feb. 19, 2026).

professional sports leagues that benefit from the SBA's protections are shifting more content to streaming services like Amazon for exorbitant sums of money while demanding payments from networks that would leave them in the red. While the leagues' member teams face ruthless competition on the field, court, and ice, the SBA insulates the leagues from facing competition in the sale of their telecast rights. It is worth considering: *Is this what the SBA is supposed to protect?*

It undoubtedly is not. Unlike 1961 when the inability to pool telecast rights might have stemmed the growth and development of professional sports leagues, the media marketplace for sports is completely different today. The NFL and other sports leagues see no end to how much money they can extract from their broadcast TV partners. Perhaps it's time to reevaluate whether the SBA remains in the public interest. Policymakers should survey antitrust experts to see whether professional sports leagues that are able to extract eye-popping multi-*billion* dollar telecast rights contracts really need an antitrust exemption. Or maybe the availability of any antitrust exemption should hinge on whether these telecast rights deals provide meaningful and simple access to fans. Better yet: As Chairman Carr noted just yesterday, perhaps broadcasters should have an exemption to collectively negotiate with the various sports leagues.⁶⁷ Whatever the solution, it is clear that one is needed sooner rather than later.

B. The FCC Must Eliminate its Outdated and Discriminatory National and Local Ownership Rules

As shown in Sections II and III, recent data reconfirm the importance to broadcasters of retaining increasingly expensive sports rights, despite competition from unregulated,

⁶⁷ Kelcee Griffis, *Carr Suggests TV Networks Bargain Collectively for Sports Rights*, Bloomberg (Mar. 26, 2026).

deeper-pocketed tech and pureplay streaming platforms that have had increasing success in acquiring and placing very popular live sports programming behind subscription paywalls. The rights to live sports continue to rise in cost beyond the astronomical level, with S&P Global projecting that U.S. TV and streaming sports rights will reach \$37.1 billion by 2030, up from \$29.2 billion in 2025 and \$14.6 billion in 2015.⁶⁸ And this projection made in 2025 is very likely too modest, given the NFL's move toward early renegotiation of its U.S. media rights in 2026, amid reports that the league could be looking for as much as a "50% increase in revenue."⁶⁹ Ever-increasing costs will accelerate the acquisition of sports rights by tech/streaming platforms with vastly greater scale and resources than constrained broadcasters. And this will lead to higher consumer subscription fees for access to that desired programming.

Fortunately, the FCC can take affirmative steps now to address the issues flagged in its Public Notice. For one, the FCC's antiquated ownership restrictions that apply only to broadcasters seriously exacerbate their struggle to compete effectively for sports rights. The Commission should repeal its national television ownership cap and its local television and radio ownership rules that hurt local stations.⁷⁰ Artificial restrictions on broadcasters'

⁶⁸ S&P Global Market Intelligence Kagan estimates; industry data as of Mar. 2025. See also Wayne Friedman, *Sports Rights Costs Grow Faster Than Revenue Gains*, *Television News Daily* (Aug. 29, 2025) (reporting that sports rights fees increased 122% from 2015-2025).

⁶⁹ Wayne Friedman, *Concerns Arise Over Local Ad Inventory With NFL, Other Sports League Deals*, *mediapost.com* (Mar. 10, 2026) (also noting concerns that the result of renegotiations would be to "peel off some existing games to be sold to existing or new streaming platforms").

⁷⁰ See Reply Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459 (Jan. 16, 2026); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459 (Dec. 17, 2025); Reply Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318 (Aug. 22, 2025); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318 (Aug. 4, 2025); Written Ex Parte Communication of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318 (Apr. 2, 2025).

scale inhibit their ability to compete with subscription platforms for popular sports programming and contributes to the migration of sports from freely available broadcast services to pay platforms, to the detriment of consumers in all local markets.

Since the decline of cable RSNs starting in 2023, some larger broadcast TV station groups have acquired rights, especially local rights, to air some live sports, including some MLB, NHL, NBA, WNBA, and NWSL games, to the benefit of local viewers.⁷¹ But broadcasters need greater scale, with opportunities to reach more viewers and earn more ad revenues, to have even a chance to retain those rights long term, which is not a “slam dunk,”⁷² and to compete for additional popular sports programming.⁷³ It would serve the public interest for live sports programming to remain available free over-the-air, rather than placed behind multiple different streaming services’ paywalls, which as discussed in Section III, causes acute consumer confusion and frustration. But broadcasters, prevented by outdated ownership rules from achieving national reach and greater local scale, cannot effectively compete with unregulated platforms for very costly live sports programming⁷⁴ and for other

⁷¹ See, e.g., Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 118-119 (Dec. 17, 2025); Section II, *supra*.

⁷² Tim Hanlon, *Sports Broadcasting’s Shifting Landscape Is No Slam Dunk for Local TV Stations*, tvrev.com (Apr. 25, 2024) (discussing challenges of local TV stations to becoming long-term media replacements for revenue-hungry sports franchises and leagues).

⁷³ See Tom Butts, *Survey Reveals Streamers’ Dominance Over Media Sports Rights*, tvtechnology.com (Mar. 16, 2026) (discussing new report that global streaming services are expected to dominate the rights to live sports due to their “reach” and “audience data”).

⁷⁴ As NAB earlier explained, greater national, regional, and local scale are all important to broadcasters’ ability to obtain rights to air live sports programming. See Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 23-24 (Aug. 4, 2025); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 108, 117-120 (Dec. 17, 2025). See also Letter from Daniel Kirkpatrick, Counsel to E.W. Scripps Co., to Marlene H. Dortch, FCC Secretary, MB Docket Nos. 22-459 and 17-318, Attachment at 1-3 (Sept. 10, 2025) (discussing how increased scale enabled Scripps to add hundreds of hours of sports programming, and additional local news programming, to TV stations in five local markets after acquiring a second outlet in those markets, and

programming valued by audiences.⁷⁵

The Commission's decades-old ownership rules restrict broadcasters' reach and their ad revenues, which in turn hurts their ability to produce and/or acquire quality programming (including news and sports). These rules also hamper broadcasters' ability to obtain investment capital, which further hurts their ability to attract viewers, earn ad dollars, and invest in a diverse range of informational and entertainment programming and new technologies. The Commission must end this anti-competitive vicious circle by removing its antiquated national and local TV ownership rules immediately.⁷⁶

C. The Commission Should Modernize its Rules to Support the Transition to ATSC 3.0

One of the most impactful actions the Commission can take to help broadcast TV stations better compete for premium live sports content is to modernize its rules supporting the transition to the ATSC 3.0 standard. As the Commission has recognized, the ATSC 3.0 standard is poised to deliver substantial benefits to viewers across the country. Relevant to live sports, the ATSC 3.0 standard delivers sharper picture quality, richer and more

explaining how Scripps' greater scale after acquiring ION enabled it to better compete for sports programming on a national and regional level that likely otherwise would have been put behind a paywall).

⁷⁵ NAB also previously explained how lack of scale impedes TV broadcasters' ability to compete with video outlets having (inter)national scale in the acquisition and/or production of programming generally, including all types of entertainment programming, and impairs their ability to provide high-quality and costly to produce informational programming, including local news. See Notice of Ex Parte Communication of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 21-28 (Apr. 2, 2025); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 19-25 (Aug. 4, 2025); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 103-17 (Dec. 17, 2025).

⁷⁶ See Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 22-459, at 62-67, 103-104 (Dec. 17, 2025); Comments of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 19-20, 25 (Aug. 4, 2025); Written Ex Parte Communication of NAB, MB Docket No. 17-318, at 21-22, 26-28 (Apr. 2, 2025) (describing the negative feedback loop that broadcasters are consigned to by the national and local ownership restrictions).

immersive audio, enhanced accessibility features and interactive applications that promote viewer engagement with live sports programming – all for free over-the-air.⁷⁷

Without a nationwide transition, local station groups risk competing for sports telecast rights with an inferior platform that lacks the rich picture and audio quality features that other competitors can offer. Transitioning all broadcast TV stations will enable stations to compete more vigorously on quality and features with streaming services that face no regulatory limits on what they can offer to the public. Station groups are already taking the initiative to pilot ATSC 3.0 for live sports to demonstrate to the public the extraordinary benefits of the standard's improved visual and audio experience.

For instance, in 2024, Gray Media broadcast the Kentucky Derby for its Louisville NBC affiliate in High Dynamic Range (HDR) with Dolby Vision and immersive sound using Dolby Atmos,⁷⁸ and in 2025, Gray Media tested and deployed the transmission of HDR10+ and Dolby Vision high dynamic range in multiple TV markets in advance of the National Football Conference Championship Game and the Super Bowl.⁷⁹ NBCUniversal offers a NextGen TV application accessible on ATSC 3.0-compatible TV sets. The app brings new digital features to audiences, such as the ability to restart a program, interactive Today Show features, access to sports clips, and sports statistics.⁸⁰ And Sinclair has launched NextGen

⁷⁷ Comments of the NAB, GN Docket No. 16-142, at 2 (Jan. 20, 2026) (NAB ATSC 3.0 Comments).

⁷⁸ *Gray Television Rolling Out Advanced Features With NextGen TV*, TVNewsCheck (Apr. 29, 2024).

⁷⁹ Phil Kurz, *Gray Media Puts 2 Separate HDR Standards On-Air in Multiple ATSC 3.0 Markets*, TVTech (Jan. 23, 2025).

⁸⁰ Case Study, FinCons Group, *NextGen TV App: The Future of Broadcasting* (accessed Mar. 18, 2026); Sierra Waggoner, *NextGen TV Brings Free, High-Tech Viewing Experience to Football Fans and Beyond*, CBS Austin (Sept. 22, 2025).

TV sports channels, T2Tennis and PickelballTV in HDR.⁸¹ That's just what broadcasters are doing today without an FCC-supported full transition. When broadcast TV stations make the full transition to ATSC 3.0, they will be able to offer viewers an even wider range of rich, immersive viewing experiences for live sports. And to the sports leagues that sell telecast rights, this new standard will ensure broadcast TV stations are able to offer comparable capabilities to streaming services.⁸²

Although broadcast TV station groups are expending significant resources to bring the benefits of ATSC 3.0 to consumers, FCC action is required to fully implement the transition.⁸³ In particular, the Commission needs to modernize the All-Channel Receiver Act framework to ensure households have the equipment capable of receiving the ATSC 3.0 signal. The Commission should adopt dates certain to sunset the ATSC 1.0 standard to ensure a coordinated transition to the ATSC 3.0 standard. A sunset date is a critical focal point that will align all ecosystem parties to make concrete plans to adopt the standard; without it, the transition could sputter and stall. Content protection also is critical to ensuring broadcasters' ability to bid for sports league telecast contracts, as the leagues require protection against services that may take major sports programming and re-broadcast it over the Internet.⁸⁴ Because streaming services already have the ability to safeguard their

⁸¹ *Broadcasters Expanding Reach of NEXTGEN TV Features and Enhanced Video, Audio, Interactivity, and New Content*, Business Wire (Apr. 3, 2025).

⁸² NCS Staff, *NextGen TV narrows gap between broadcast and streaming*, NCS (Apr. 25, 2025).

⁸³ See NAB ATSC 3.0 Comments.

⁸⁴ See, e.g., *ABC, Inc. v. Aereo, Inc.*, 573 U.S. 431 (2014) (holding that the Aereo service violated copyright laws by re-broadcasting ABC content on the Internet).

content, broadcasters must have that same ability to safeguard their live sports programming to ensure parity with other media marketplace competitors.

In a marketplace where the largest, most highly capitalized players, including Big Tech platforms, are free to bid extraordinary sums for sports telecast deals, modernizing FCC rules to support the transition to the ATSC 3.0 standard would create better parity in the service that broadcast TV stations can offer sports leagues. Of course, modernizing the rules to ensure a full transition for consumers is just one piece of the puzzle.

VI. CONCLUSION

Live sports and broadcast TV have long gone hand in hand, with each strengthening the other. That relationship has not only benefited both parties, it has also served the public well by bringing communities together and helping support local news and other programming on broadcast TV.

But that is starting to change. More premium live sports are moving behind paywalls, and that shift is eroding longstanding public benefits. Big Tech platforms and global pureplay streamers with tens of billions of dollars of revenue to spend are not focused on strengthening local communities, but on selling products and adding subscribers. That is why policymakers are right to take a close look at this changing marketplace, and why the Commission can and should take concrete steps now to begin addressing the problem.

Respectfully submitted,

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