

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write regarding action by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to bypass a bipartisan provision signed into law (P.L. 114-113) as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016.

On March 31, 2014, the FCC ignored bipartisan concerns raised by Congress and adopted a controversial policy that effectively eliminated joint sales agreements (JSAs). These agreements, under which stations jointly sell advertising, often allow local news stations to stay afloat in smaller markets that cannot sustain them independently. We have seen first-hand the benefits of JSAs in our local communities and across the country. JSAs contribute to programming diversity, such as Spanish-language programming, and minority ownership. In one case, a JSA saved lives by providing broadcasters in Joplin, Missouri, with financial efficiencies to upgrade their Doppler radar equipment prior to the devastating May 2011 tornado.

Recognizing the critical role local broadcasters play in communities around our states, Congress took bipartisan action to ensure existing JSAs can continue. As supporters of the provision in P.L. 114-113 that explicitly grandfathers existing JSAs, we are extremely disturbed to learn the FCC is now requiring parties to unwind these agreements in connection with broadcast license transfers.

The FCC is entrusted with an important responsibility to review license transfers, and it must not use these reviews to undermine Congress' clear intent to preserve JSAs that were lawfully executed prior to the FCC's 2014 rule changes. We believe the Commission can successfully address our concerns by taking the following remedial actions: (1) eliminating any conditions imposed on previously approved license transfers that require the termination of JSAs in existence prior to March 31, 2014; and (2) respecting the statutory grandfather of JSAs when evaluating any assignments and license transfers in the future.

We ask for your response no later than April 1, 2016. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

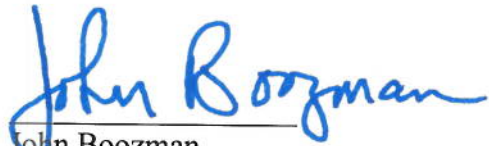


Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Richard Durbin
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



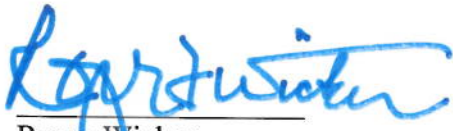
Charles Schumer
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



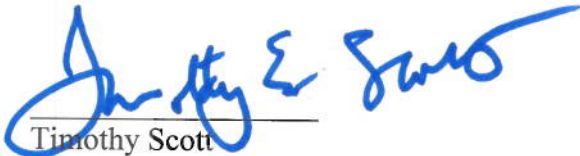
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Roger Wicker
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator



Timothy Scott
United States Senator



Benjamin Cardin
United States Senator