

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 4, 2016

**CONTACT**

Christine Brennan — (202) 225-5735

**Pallone Unveils Bill to Protect Broadcast Television Viewers and  
Mobile Broadband Users**

*‘Viewer Protection Act’ Will Help to Safeguard Consumers’ TV Signal Following  
Broadcast Incentive Auction*

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Today, **Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ)**, unveiled a draft bill, the *Viewer Protection Act*, which empowers the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to fully protect both broadcast viewers and mobile broadband users who may be affected by the upcoming Broadcast Incentive Auction.

“As we approach the Broadcast Incentive Auction, it is critical that we make this transition as seamless as possible for consumers without interruptions in their service,” **said Pallone**. “When Superstorm Sandy hit, we saw firsthand how critical it is to have access to local news and information. The Viewer Protection Act will help to ensure that viewers’ TVs do not go dark because we never know when another emergency might occur. At the same time, my bill will ensure consumers of mobile broadband reap the benefits of the incentive auction as soon as possible.”

The FCC is scheduled to begin a first-of-its-kind incentive auction in early 2016 to reallocate broadcast spectrum for mobile broadband use. At the conclusion of this auction, the Commission will assign many broadcasters that remain on the air to new channels. At a recent Congressional hearing, all five FCC Commissioners testified that they would not allow broadcast viewers to lose signal as a result of this repacking process. Pallone’s bill gives the Commissioners the tools they need to follow through on this commitment, while still protecting mobile broadband users as well.

**Pallone added**, “I am looking forward to the auction getting started early this year, and I am confident that Chairman Wheeler will conduct this auction in a timely and consumer-friendly manner. But it’s not too early to look to the transition after the bidding is over.”

Specifically, the Viewer Protection Act would:

- **Fund a viewer education effort:** FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler has committed to Ranking Member Pallone that the agency would work with him to educate consumers about how to protect their TV signal after the incentive auction. The Viewer Protection Act would fully fund this effort modeled after the successful efforts during the Digital TV transition.

- **Create an Emergency Fund to Keep Viewers' TVs from Going Dark:** The Viewer Protection Act would create a \$1 billion emergency fund that the FCC could access only if viewers are at risk of losing their broadcast signal.
- **Give Consumers Access to Faster Mobile Broadband as Quickly as Possible:** The Viewer Protect Act would direct the FCC to create a repacking plan within six months of the conclusion of the Incentive Auction. This plan will map out how remaining TV stations will be repacked after the auction so broadband consumers can reap the benefits of the auction as soon as possible. The FCC will also be given limited flexibility to modify the repacking schedule if necessary to protect broadcast viewers.

###