



March 21, 2016

Dear Representative:

The Consumer Video Choice Coalition wishes to express our strong support for the FCC's rulemaking proceeding to end the set top box monopoly and give consumers the power to choose their own video device. By injecting competition, the FCC will lower prices for families and unleash innovation.

The FCC is following the law. A bipartisan Congress directed the FCC in Section 629 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to bring competition to the set top box marketplace that would benefit consumers. Currently, cable and the pay-tv industry control 99 percent of households and essentially are forcing them to lease a set top box. But with FCC action, consumers could finally realize the full benefits Congress intended.

The FCC's plan is simple: allow consumers to purchase their own video navigation device from numerous retail outlets at costs lower than the monopoly rental rate – which costs families \$231 per household on average annually. Unlike other areas of consumer electronics, the cost of renting a set top box has increased 185 percent since 1994. By contrast, the prices for televisions and computers have dropped by 90 percent.

Consumers also would have easier access to over-the-top and streaming programming currently blocked by most cable set top boxes. The need to switch between program guides, remote controls or devices would be replaced with multiple opportunities to discover new content from independent programmers that have been blocked from getting carriage on pay-tv channel line-ups. The new rules would allow consumers more access to over-the-top programming than with traditional cable services, and they would enjoy better viewing experiences.

The Consumer Video Choice Coalition already has demonstrated that implementation of the FCC's proposed rules is technically feasible. Consumers can receive traditional, linear content from their selected MVPD, along with their chosen over-the-top content, in a seamless manner. And, all of the functionality that consumers expect from their current video service – including channel placement, emergency alerts, closed-captioning, and parental controls – would remain the same.

Charges that the FCC's action on set top boxes would compromise consumer privacy and provide inadequate protection for copyrighted material are simply not true. The FCC proposal will ensure that third-party devices and apps follow the same protections as cable devices themselves do. Additionally, all providers of video services are subject to a plethora of other video privacy-related rules and statutes, as well as the FTC's privacy framework.

Under the FCC's proposal, open standards bodies, not the government, would set specifications for competitive navigation devices. This process would allow all stakeholders to have a voice in creating the benchmarks that navigation devices must meet to ensure protection and security of copyrighted



content. Objective criteria would determine whether navigation devices comply with these open standards. This approach ensures that third party navigation devices protect content and allow subscribers only to access the content for which they pay. Any third party navigation device that doesn't honor limitations on copying and recording could be denied access to essential information flows by MVPDs.

It is no surprise consumers are demanding lower cost video options. They want devices that provide access to both new streaming services and traditional content on their TVs. That is why the public has so enthusiastically embraced what the FCC is proposing. The wave of positive news coverage by local broadcast stations and newspapers across the nation shows that the American people are tired of overpaying to lease a set top box and being forced to use multiple devices to get the programming they want. Similarly, the editorial boards of the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune, and the Buffalo News have agreed it is time to unlock the box.

On behalf of consumers, content creators, public interest organizations, and technology companies, we respectfully urge you to support the FCC's rulemaking. For more information, please visit: <http://consumervideochoice.org/>

Sincerely,

Google	Consumer Action	Public Knowledge
Hauppauge	Computer and Communications Industry Association	SiliconDust
INCOMPAS	Open Technology Institute	VIZIO
FreeCast, Inc.	Writers Guild of America, West	