



September 9, 2014

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rockefeller and Ranking Member Thune,

The National Black Religious Broadcasters (NBRB) have eagerly embraced digital television technologies to expand access to our ministries and organizational mission to spread the gospel. We have supported innovation and policies that allow us to reach as many people interested in the Word of God as possible as through every video medium possible.

We equally embrace all distribution platforms – the internet, cable television, broadcast television and radio – in order to reach as many people as possible. This is why we cannot support the idea behind “Local Choice,” which would create an “a la carte” system for broadcast television while leaving cable programming as is. At its very heart, this proposal, as presented in the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), strips local television from the basic tier of programming that is vital, needed and wanted by television viewers all across the country.

Faith-based broadcasters – especially broadcasters of color – depend greatly on the basic tier to reach key audiences, regardless of socioeconomic status. At its very heart, the pending Local Choice proposal strips local television from the basic tier of programming that is vital, needed and wanted by television viewers all across the country. And it does so at a higher cost to consumers – many of them the consumers we serve.

This is bad news for minority and faith-based programming, which may not be as widely-viewed, but is still highly valued by many communities. Under a broadcast only a la carte system, channels featuring religious broadcasts or gospel music would be put at a serious disadvantage, as many of these channels would be forced out of the market while more highly-viewed networks corner advertising revenues.

We urge you to avoid the proposals set forth in “Local Choice”, and to preserve television diversity and real consumer choice. NBRB will continue to work to ensure that we in the religious community are able to reach our viewers through the communication vehicles currently available to us. Sadly, this proposal does not offer this option.

Sincerely,

**Reverend Sheldon Williams**  
**President**  
**National Black Religious Broadcasters**