



July 9, 2014

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Insurance
Member,
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman McCaskill:

On behalf of American consumers, we write to express our support for your ongoing efforts to examine the confusing and deceptive billing practices of the cable and satellite TV industry. Your leadership on this issue has brought to the forefront the critical need for Congress to address the harmful billing practices of the pay-TV industry, and design consumer protections that bring measureable economic relief to cable and satellite TV subscribers on their monthly bills.

We also commend the [consumer fact-gathering campaign](#) you initiated in Missouri to better understand the experiences your constituents are having with their pay-TV service providers regarding unreliable service, excessive fees and questionable charges. In furtherance of this effort, we share the following information on pay-TV/broadband service provider network outages.

According to an independent analysis by [TVfreedom.org](#) of data on [Downdetector.com](#), there have been **3,050 substantial service failures** experienced by the five largest pay-TV service providers in the United States during the first five months of 2014 (January 1 – May 31, 2014). The length of some of these outages may have lasted a few hours or were addressed within days of the initial service failure. However, the average U.S. consumer who pays upwards of \$130 per month for bundled pay-TV/broadband services must typically bear the brunt of this type of service degradation without explanation or remuneration.

This data highlights concerns regarding pay-TV service and broadband network reliability across the nation. In light of increasing profit margins for the nation's largest multi-billion dollar pay-TV service providers, unreliable service or faulty infrastructure raises questions about the commitment each of these companies has to consumer service quality.

Consumers' unhappiness with their television service is validated in a 2014 telecom survey conducted by the [Consumer Reports National Research Center](#) which found that customers predominantly feel 'overcharged' and 'overwhelmed' by their pay-TV service providers. In fact, consumers participating in the [survey](#) gave low scores to the biggest cable and satellite TV companies on value, reliability and customer service.

As Congress looks to modernize the communications regulatory landscape in a balanced way, you have a unique opportunity to help America's pay-TV consumers by incorporating basic protections into prospective legislation intended to drive competition, consumer choice and innovation in an increasingly dynamic video marketplace.

We appreciate your dedication to this important issue and welcome the opportunity to work with your office and the Senate Commerce Committee to highlight pay-TV's truth in billing practices, and in advancing policies that ultimately will hold cable and satellite TV service providers accountable to the American television and broadband consumer.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration to this matter. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Kenny
Director of Public Affairs
TVfreedom.org

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee