

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Kelly Ayotte  
United States Senate  
144 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ayotte:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senate  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baldwin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John Barrasso  
United States Senate  
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark Begich  
United States Senate  
111 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
United States Senate  
458 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate  
724 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
United States Senate  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Cory Booker  
United States Senate  
141 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Booker:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John Boozman  
United States Senate  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boozman:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
United States Senate  
713 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Richard Burr  
United States Senate  
217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senate  
509 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senate  
513 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Carper:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senate  
393 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss  
United States Senate  
416 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Chambliss:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Daniel Coats  
United States Senate  
493 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coats:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tom Coburn  
United States Senate  
172 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coburn:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
United States Senate  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cochran:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
United States Senate  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senate  
127A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coons:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Bob Corker  
United States Senate  
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Corker:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
517 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
United States Senate  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Crapo:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
United States Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cruz:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Joe Donnelly  
United States Senate  
720 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Donnelly:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi  
United States Senate  
379A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Enzi:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Deb Fischer  
United States Senate  
383 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Fischer:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jeff Flake  
United States Senate  
368 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Flake:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Al Franken  
United States Senate  
309 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
United States Senate  
290 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Graham:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
United States Senate  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Kay R. Hagan  
United States Senate  
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hagan:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
United States Senate  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch  
United States Senate  
104 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hatch:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senate  
502 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heitkamp:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Dean Heller  
United States Senate  
324 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heller:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senate  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hirono:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John Hoeven  
United States Senate  
338 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hoeven:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
United States Senate  
205 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
United States Senate  
131 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Isakson:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
United States Senate  
404 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johanns:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
United States Senate  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tim Johnson  
United States Senate  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
388 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senate  
388 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator King:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark Kirk  
United States Senate  
524 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kirk:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senate  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu  
United States Senate  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Landrieu:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senate  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mike Lee  
United States Senate  
316 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lee:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin  
United States Senate  
269 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Levin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Joe Manchin III  
United States Senate  
306 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Manchin:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
United States Senate  
218 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John McCain  
United States Senate  
241 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Claire McCaskill  
United States Senate  
506 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Robert Menendez  
United States Senate  
528 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Menendez:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
United States Senate  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senate  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
United States Senate  
361A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Moran:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue

to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers’ bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers’ monthly bill. By weakening the FCC’s set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Christopher Murphy  
United States Senate  
303 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murphy:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
United States Senate  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Rand Paul  
United States Senate  
124 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Paul:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Rob Portman  
United States Senate  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark L. Pryor  
United States Senate  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Pryor:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jack Reed  
United States Senate  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable James E. Risch  
United States Senate  
483 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Risch:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
United States Senate  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Roberts:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV  
United States Senate  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rockefeller:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
United States Senate  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rubio:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
United States Senate  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
United States Senate  
722 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tim Scott  
United States Senate  
167 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
United States Senate  
326 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sessions:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate  
520 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Shaheen:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
United States Senate  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Shelby:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senate  
133 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John Thune  
United States Senate  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Patrick J. Toomey  
United States Senate  
248 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Toomey:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark Udall  
United States Senate  
730 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Tom Udall  
United States Senate  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable David Vitter  
United States Senate  
516 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Vitter:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable John E. Walsh  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Walsh:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
United States Senate  
475 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senate  
530 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Whitehouse:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wicker:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
United States Senate  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

The undersigned public interest organizations write to express opposition to a provision in S. 2799, the Satellite Television Access and Viewer Rights Act (STAVRA), that could drive up cable bill prices, reduce consumer choice, and slow down video innovation. For these reasons we urge you not to pass STAVRA without correcting this harmful language.

We strongly support making sure that satellite customers do not lose access to broadcast signals. To ensure that outcome, Congress must pass reauthorizing language this year. Congress has previously passed clean reauthorizations without attaching special interest provisions. Unfortunately, the bill making its way to the Senate floor contains a provision promoted by the cable industry that could harm consumers who do not even subscribe to satellite service.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote a competitive market in set-top boxes. One way the FCC has done this is through “common reliance”—a principle that requires that cable operators use the same security technology on their own devices that is available to third parties. Common reliance is a structural guarantee that cable operators will not roll out new features or services on their systems that will only work with the cable operator’s own set-top boxes. These rules have allowed innovative devices like TiVO to develop and compete in the video device marketplace.

The current FCC rules do not prevent cable operators from upgrading their networks, providing new services, offering new content, or rolling out new devices of their own. They merely ensure that all cable services and features remain available to consumers who choose not to rent a set-top box from their cable provider. Even so, there is widespread agreement the FCC should update its current implementation of the set-top box provisions of the 1996 Act. Some, including Senator Edward Markey, have suggested ways that would allow the FCC to improve on the current system without harming consumers in the short term. Senator Markey’s approach would direct the FCC to choose a new technological standard that would allow both cable companies and independent manufacturers to continue to create new devices. Once it has done so, it could phase out the existing CableCARD rules. This would be the ideal solution to cable’s demands for eliminating the old CableCARD system, while promoting, instead of sacrificing competition and consumer choice.

Instead of this simple fix, the Senate is set to consider S. 2799 in a form that will not direct the FCC to ensure set-top box competition, and if passed will allow cable rates to continue to rise. Viewers currently pay too much for cable. Some of the most pernicious drivers of costs to

consumers are below-the-line fees—unadvertised charges that cable operators slip onto viewers' bills to hide the true cost of a cable subscription. The most common below-the-line fee is the monthly charge to rent a set-top box, adding as much as \$10 or \$20 to a viewers' monthly bill. By weakening the FCC's set-top box rules, S. 2799 would contribute to this problem.

Some Senators have objected to taking up S. 2799 on the Senate floor in order to prevent enactment of a set-top box provision that would harm consumers, raise cable rates, and harm innovation. We strongly support this effort. It is important that the Senate does not allow the harmful provisions currently in STAVRA to pass as written.

If some insist on including special interest provisions to pad the pockets of the cable industry in legislation designed to keep the government open, we urge you to reject such a cynical, anti-consumer move. There is no reason to hold the workings of the government or the delivery of satellite service hostage to the cable industry's effort to expand their monopolistic stranglehold on consumers.

Senators have two options to move forward in a consumer friendly way: Either strip offensive set-top box language from STAVRA, or revise STAVRA with language similar to the Markey proposal which will direct the FCC to approve a new technological standard for set-top boxes prior to eliminating CableCARD. Without such actions, we urge Senators to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Consumers Union  
Free Press Action Fund  
Parents Television Council  
Public Knowledge