

National
Religious
Broadcasters

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Christian
Communicators
Impacting
the World



April 23, 2012

The Honorable Jim DeMint
167 Russell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator DeMint:

As President and CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), I write to express deep concern over the unintended consequences of the *Next Generation Television Marketplace Act* (S. 2008/H.R. 3675) for Christian television. Specifically, by eliminating "Must-Carry" rules for local commercial television broadcast stations to be viewed on pay-tv platforms, rules that have been in place for decades, this legislation could be fatal to many Christian TV stations and may harm the ability of millions of Americans to continue accessing the religious programming on which they rely.

Surveys have shown that approximately two-thirds of Americans consume Christian media every month, which is significantly more than those who attend church during the same period. A large percentage of those individuals tune into Christian TV programming, so it is clear that many viewers benefit from the service of their local Christian broadcasters.¹

Religious TV broadcasters often rely on the "Must-Carry" provisions found in Section 614 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. §534) to ensure that viewers can access their important programming through cable. Eliminating those rules would be of significant detriment to the stations NRB represents and the viewers that rely on them for spiritual guidance. Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that the TV marketplace has shifted in such a way that the "Must-Carry" rights enacted by Congress in 1992 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1997 are no longer necessary. Notably, Congress then found that cable systems have an "economic incentive" to "delete,

¹ "More People Use Christian Media Than Attend Church." The Barna Group. March 2005. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/183-more-people-use-christian-media-than-attend-church?q=radio>

reposition, or not carry local broadcast signals” and that, without “Must-Carry” rules, the “viability” of broadcasters “will be seriously jeopardized.”²

Many Americans rely on local Christian broadcasters, and my concern is that the *Next Generation Television Marketplace Act* could deny them access to these stations. On behalf of NRB’s members, I urge you to leave intact the long-standing “Must-Carry” rules for all broadcasters, commercial and non-commercial, as you consider the future of this legislation and other related initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your leadership in the Senate Commerce Committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Frank Wright', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Frank Wright, Ph.D.
President & CEO

² Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-385, § 2(a)(16).