

As FOX Blackout on Cablevision Drags on Congressmen Seek FCC Involvement

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 18 October 2010 16:17



How long will Cablevision subs see this on FOX channels? The FCC may have a say.

Representatives from FOX and Cablevision met shortly today, but as was the case on Saturday and Sunday FOX channels remained blacked out for the cable operator. With the negotiations getting no where, politicians have jumped into the fray.

New Jersey Democratic Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez jointly filed the following FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski urging immediate FCC action to resolve the dispute:

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

News Corp. (FOX) and Cablevision recently failed to reach an agreement for the retransmission of WNYW (NY channel 5), WWOR (NJ channel 9) and WTXF (Philadelphia channel 29). Because FOX has been unwilling to keep its signal on while the parties continue to negotiate, approximately 3 million Cablevision subscribers in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut are left without access to these broadcast channels, and the local news, sports, and other programming they offer. We ask that the FCC take immediate action to move the parties to a prompt resolution of this dispute and to minimize the impact of future disputes.

Unfortunately, the FOX and Cablevision dispute is not an isolated incident. Disputes between broadcasters and video providers appear to be increasing. Just last March, Cablevision and Disney/WABC-TV failed to reach an agreement and the WABC-TV signal was pulled from

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Cablevision. While that signal was eventually restored, it was only after Cablevision customers were without WABC-TV for approximately 20 hours, including the first 15 minutes of the Academy Awards broadcast. Upcoming retransmission consent negotiations between FOX and the DISH Network may put even more hardworking New Jerseyans at risk of losing television programming that they have come to expect and rely on for their local news and entertainment. We are deeply troubled that consumers are repeatedly being used as pawns in these programming disputes.

We ask that the FCC exercise all of its available authority to promptly resolve the FOX and Cablevision dispute. It is our understanding that the FCC suggested that FOX and Cablevision resolve their dispute through mediation, but FOX declined. We ask that you immediately invite representatives from both parties to meet with you and other FCC officials in order to reenergize and resolve these negotiations.

The FCC also needs to reexamine its existing regulations for retransmission consent negotiations. As you know, a petition to modify these rules has been pending before the FCC since March 2010. We urge the FCC to work diligently and expeditiously to consider the comments that have been filed on that petition and revise its rules. We ask that the FCC provide us with a response within five business days that outlines a firm schedule for the FCC's action on the pending retransmission consent petition (MB Docket No. 10-71). Continued delay in reforming the retransmission consent process will only harm consumers in New Jersey and throughout the country.

Sincerely,

FRANK LAUTENBERG

ROBERT MENENDEZ

“When broadcasters like News Corp. remove their signals, they hurt viewers in an attempt to gain business leverage,” said Charles Schueler, Cablevision’s executive vice president of communications. “Cablevision agrees to submit to binding arbitration, as called for by more than 50 elected officials from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut as the fastest and fairest way to return Fox programming to Cablevision viewers. We call on News Corp. to do the same.”

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The NLCS, which is airing on FOX has the day off, but Game 4 is scheduled for Tues. at 4pm ET.



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