

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
FCC's Media Bureau Seeks Comment on Sports) MB Docket No. 26-45
Broadcasting Practices and Marketplace)
Developments)

COMMENTS OF SINCLAIR, INC.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Sinclair¹ applauds the Commission’s exploration of the evolving marketplace for sports programming and the impact of that evolution on the broadcast industry and local journalism.² Sports programming carried on broadcast television plays a vital role in fostering civic pride, cultural cohesion, and community engagement at both the local and national levels. Popular sports are a vital part of our shared American culture and identity. In a large country, a common culture is critical for social cohesion. Sports remain one of the last remaining “monoculture” touchstones that can serve as a common reference point between strangers – the topic that the newest entry-level hire can comfortably discuss with the CEO. Sports also play a vital role in local culture, generating civic engagement and pride. And for decades, sports and local television have had a symbiotic relationship. Broadcast distribution has helped transform local teams into widely followed and beloved cultural institutions, while sports programming in turn has reinforced the role of broadcast television as a central platform for shared civic experiences and community engagement. Stated differently: coverage has driven fandom which has driven ratings which has driven an investment in and commitment to local journalism.

¹ Sinclair Inc. is a diversified media company and leading provider of local news and sports.

² *Media Bureau Seeks Comment on Sports Broadcasting Practices and Marketplace Developments*, Public Notice, MB Docket No. 26-45, DA 26-188 (Feb. 25, 2026).

The ongoing migration of sports content to subscription-based streaming platforms is threatening this model. This migration is fragmenting access, increasing consumer costs, and undermining longstanding public-interest benefits associated with broadcasting.

Broadcast television remains the only video platform that offers near-universal, free access to news, information, and major cultural events. Live sports programming is a critical component of the broadcast ecosystem, as major sporting events continue to drive the largest audiences and play an essential role in sustaining the economic viability of local broadcast stations. Sports programming is also critical to the financial model that supports local broadcast journalism. Without high-value live sports on broadcast television, local broadcast journalism will suffer.

Beyond the matters of viewership and economics for stations, consumers benefit from the availability of popular sports programming on free over-the-air broadcast television. Breaking sports programming up amongst selective proprietary streaming islands allows Big Tech and Media platforms to silo the most popular programming and set the stage for inevitable and unending price increases.

Given the importance of these issues, we commend the Commission for shining a light on the evolving marketplace for live sports programming. As the Commission notes, “live sports and broadcast television have enjoyed a long and mutually beneficial relationship – one that worked well for consumers too.”³ Policymakers should want to see that win-win-win relationship continue in a sustainable manner that reflects the public-private partnership between major sports leagues and their fans.

³ *Id.* at 1.

II. LIVE SPORTS ARE A KEY DRIVER OF BROADCAST VIEWERSHIP AND STATION ECONOMICS

The relationship between broadcast television and professional sports, particularly the NFL, has long been mutually beneficial and mutually reinforcing, with each driving the growth and value of the other. For decades, free, over-the-air broadcast distribution has enabled sports teams and leagues to reach mass audiences, helping to build fan bases and increase the commercial value of teams and league media rights. The NFL's rise to become the most valuable sports league in the United States has been closely tied to its broadcast partnerships, with media rights agreements now well over \$100 billion.⁴ Academic and industry analyses have found that television exposure has been a primary driver of league popularity and franchise valuations, with widespread availability of games increasing fan engagement, advertising demand, and long-term franchise value.⁵

At the same time, professional sports play a critical role in sustaining the free over-the-air broadcast television model and the local journalism it supports. Live sports programming

⁴ “NFL finalizes blockbuster \$113bn media rights deal through 2033 season,” The Guardian (Mar. 18, 2021) available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/mar/18/nfl-media-rights-contracts-amazon>.

⁵ *See, e.g.*, Jake Kobrick “NFL Television Broadcasting and the Federal Courts,” Federal Judicial Center, available at: <https://www.fjc.gov/history/spotlight-judicial-history/nfl-television-broadcasting> (“In the mid to late twentieth century, the NFL grew to become the most popular and profitable professional sports league in the United States, and its presence on television was the single most important factor in its rise.”); Richard C. Crepeau, “The Perfect Television Game,” Illinois Scholarship Online (Aug. 15, 2020) available at: <https://academic.oup.com/illinois-scholarship-online/book/40345/chapter-abstract/346927779> (“Television was a key to the growth and success of the NFL.”); Gustavo Bergantinos, Juan D. Moreno-Ternero, “The economics of sportscast revenue sharing,” (Jan. 5, 2026) (“Consequently, the sale of broadcasting and media rights is the most important source of revenue for professional sports clubs”); “NFL – Its Unique Strategy and Dominating Valuation Proposition,” Kroll (Nov. 25, 2024), available at: <https://www.kroll.com/en/reports/valuation/valuation-insights-h2-2024/nfl-unique-strategy-dominating-valuation-proposition> (“Multiples paid for sports franchises have risen dramatically over the past 10 to 20 years as teams’ media revenues have grown.”)

remains one of the few types of content that consistently draws large real-time audiences. In 2025, 96 of the 100 most-watched U.S. telecasts were sports events, and 92 of those telecasts were NFL or college football games.⁶ In an increasingly fragmented media environment, sports continue to dominate the most-watched programs of the year on television. Events such as the Super Bowl, NFL playoff games, the Olympics, the NCAA basketball tournaments, and the World Series regularly attract millions of viewers.

These large audiences are in turn critical for advertising dollars for the industry. Advertisers spent approximately \$17.7 billion on national linear television sports programming,⁷ and NFL games alone generate \$6-7 billion in annual advertising revenue across the major broadcast networks.⁸ During the 2024-2025 season, NFL games accounted for more than 23 percent of all ad impressions across the big-four networks.⁹

Live sports programming produces significant lead-in and halo effects that benefit other broadcast content, including local news.¹⁰ Nielsen data suggests that major sports events, particularly NFL games, can meaningfully increase overall viewing levels and drive audiences to

⁶ Austin Karp, “Sports make up 96 of top 100 telecasts in 2025, tying an all-time record,” Sports Business Journal (Dec. 30, 2025), available at: <https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/Articles/2025/12/30/sports-make-up-96-of-top-100-telecasts-in-2025-tying-an-all-time-record/>.

⁷ John Consoli, “In Challenged Ad Climate, Sports Advertising Continues Growth,” TV News Check (Feb. 8, 2023) available at: <https://tvnewscheck.com/business/article/in-challenged-ad-climate-sports-advertising-continues-growth/>.

⁸ Bevin Fletcher, “NFL scores big for advertising, streaming-exclusives drive brand engagement,” StreamTV Insider (Sep. 2, 2025) available at: <https://www.streamtvinsider.com/advertising/nfl-scores-big-advertising-streaming-exclusives-drive-brand-engagement>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Adam Weiner, “An NFL Antitrust Debate May Determine Local Broadcasting’s Future,” TVNewsCheck (Mar. 9, 2026) available at: <https://tvnewscheck.com/business/article/an-nfl-antitrust-debate-may-determine-local-broadcastings-future/> (“NFL games deliver the largest audiences on television. Those audiences fuel advertising demand and provide powerful lead-ins to local news.”)

other programming; in one recent measurement period, sports programming accounted for approximately one-third of all broadcast television viewing, and the growth in broadcast viewing during that period was largely attributable to football telecasts.¹¹ Indeed, the Nielsen Gauge, showing the time viewers spend watching different sources of programming, regularly shows broadcast viewership fluctuating with the beginning and end of the NFL season. The start of football in September produces a double-digit or greater increase in broadcast viewing, including a 20 percent month-over-month surge attributed to the NFL and college football, while elevated levels persist throughout the fall and winter as NFL games dominate broadcast ratings.¹²

Local stations are increasingly reliant on sports programming in light of increased competition for advertising dollars from unregulated tech platforms. As one observer has stated, “NFL programming supports advertising revenue, strengthens retransmission negotiations, feeds audiences into local news and amplifies the reach that attracts political campaigns. Those dynamics have shaped the economics of local television for decades.”¹³

Simply put, live sports programming is essential to sustaining the economic model that supports broadcast television and local journalism. Revenue generated from high-viewership sporting events, including advertising and distribution revenue, as well as the lead-in effect that sports programming provides for local newscasts, helps fund the operations of local television stations. These revenues support local newsrooms that provide essential public-interest

¹¹ “NFL games lead broadcast and cable ratings during historic viewership increase,” NCS (Oct. 21, 2025) available at: <https://www.newscaststudio.com/2025/10/21/nfl-games-lead-broadcast-and-cable-ratings-during-historic-viewership-increase/>.

¹² “Nielsen: NFL fuels historic spike in US broadcast viewership,” Advanced Television (Oct. 22, 2025) available at: <https://www.advanced-television.com/2025/10/22/nielsen-nfl-fuels-historic-spike-in-us-broadcast-viewership/>.

¹³ Weiner, *supra* n. 8.

programming, including coverage of local government, public safety, severe weather, elections, and community events.

Local broadcast stations remain among the largest producers of original local journalism in the United States. In many communities, they are the primary or only source of regularly produced local news. Maintaining strong broadcast audiences, including those generated by sports programming, helps sustain the economic foundation that allows these stations to invest in reporters, investigative journalism, and community-focused coverage. If marquee sports programming were to migrate entirely to subscription-based platforms or streaming services, the resulting decline in broadcast viewership would irreparably weaken this economic foundation and reduce resources available for local journalism.

III. THE MIGRATION OF SPORTS TO FRAGMENTED STREAMING PLATFORMS IS CREATING CONSUMER CONFUSION, FRUSTRATION, AND HIGHER COSTS

The increasing migration of live sports to streaming platforms has introduced significant fragmentation that frustrates consumers. One survey shows that 87 percent of sports fans find it at least somewhat frustrating to figure out where to watch the games they want to see, and almost 25 percent feel very frustrated.¹⁴ Nearly two-thirds of sports fans say it's a "hassle" to use multiple services to watch games during a season, and half say that it has become harder to find the games they want to watch compared to a year ago.¹⁵

This fragmentation has consequences for viewers. Almost two-thirds of fans say having games on different platforms makes it more difficult to check on other games being shown at the

¹⁴ George Winslow, "Study: Overloaded Sports Fans Fed Up with Fragmented Viewing Options," (March 9, 2026) available at: <https://www.tvtechnology.com/insights/analysis/study-overloaded-sports-fans-fed-up-with-fragmented-sports-rights>.

¹⁵ "Survey: Sports content rules, but fragmentation causing frustration," Advanced Television (Oct. 16, 2025) available at: <https://www.advanced-television.com/2025/10/16/survey-sports-content-rules-but-fragmentation-causing-frustration/>.

same time.¹⁶ Further, nearly half of sports fans report missing games because they do not subscribe to the correct service, and 44 percent say they already subscribe to too many platforms.¹⁷

At the same time, costs are rising. Sports viewers are often forced to maintain multiple subscriptions, and analyses suggest that assembling packages across streaming platforms can cost well over \$150 per month.¹⁸ One survey shows widespread dissatisfaction with both the cost and complexity of accessing sports content, with about half of viewers who follow sports at least somewhat closely saying they were dissatisfied with the cost of the services they use.¹⁹ A recent analysis suggests that for a Yankees fan living in New York, watching every regular season game and the playoffs in 2026 “could require navigating 10 networks, five (or more) subscriptions and approaching a thousand dollars to see all the team’s games if it goes deep into October. It is a prime example of the angst of the modern sports fan. Where are my team’s games on? Do I have that service? And how much does it cost?”²⁰

In short, the migration of sports to streaming is making sports programming harder to find, more complicated to navigate, and more expensive to access.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Colin Salao, “Study exposes a major frustration sports fans have with streaming services,” *TheStreet* (Sep. 22, 2023) available at: <https://www.thestreet.com/entertainment/study-exposes-frustration-sports-fans-streaming-services>.

¹⁸ Kayla Cobb and Lucas Manfredi, “Streaming Sports Boom Means More Confusion, More Frustration and More Bills,” *TheWrap* (Sep. 9, 2025) available at: <https://www.thewrap.com/sports-streaming-rights-consumer-impact-analysis/>.

¹⁹ Maya Sweedler, “Many sports fans are unhappy with how much it costs to watch their games, an AP-NORC poll finds,” *AP* (Sep. 16, 2025) available at: <https://apnews.com/article/sports-streaming-cable-tv-poll-52a4d826a8baf05d46e71b1aa6a6fc80>.

²⁰ Andrew Marchand, “Yankees’ Netflix debut is latest example of sports’ complicated TV landscape,” *The Athletic* (March 25, 2026) available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7144726/2026/03/25/yankees-giants-mlb-opening-night-netflix-youtube-nbc/>.

IV. MAJOR SPORTS LEAGUES HAVE LONG BENEFITTED FROM PUBLIC SUBSIDIES AND SPECIAL TREATMENT

Whenever a team, after receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies and benefits from local and federal governments, relocates to another city solely out of greed, fans are rightly outraged. When teams relocate from free over-the-air broadcast to fragmented and increasingly expensive streaming services, fans have every right to feel similarly outraged.

Professional sports leagues operate within a longstanding public-private compact that includes both substantial taxpayer support and unique regulatory advantages. State and local governments have committed tens of billions of dollars, estimated at approximately \$30–35 billion, to the construction and financing of major league sports facilities in the United States.²¹ The median public contribution to sports venue construction costs between 1970 and 2020 was 73 percent of total construction costs.²² Public subsidies for professional sports facilities also frequently take the form of property tax abatements and preferential tax treatment, further increasing the public cost of stadium developments. In many jurisdictions, stadiums are either fully exempt from local property taxes or subject to long-term abatements that significantly reduce teams' tax liabilities.²³ At the federal level, additional subsidies arise through the use of

²¹ See Adam Hoffer, Joseph Johns, Craig Depken, "Taxpayers Shoulder a Heavy Burden for Sports Stadium Subsidies," The Tax Foundation (Oct. 3, 2024) available at: <https://taxfoundation.org/blog/sports-stadium-subsidies-taxpayers/>; see also Dan Moore, "Taxpayers Are About to Subsidize a Lot More Sports Stadiums," The Atlantic (May 8, 2024) available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/05/sports-stadium-subsidies-taxpayer-funding/678319/>.

²² See Hoffer, Johns, Depken *supra* n. 16.

²³ Neil deMause, "Stadiums and arenas are set to collect \$18B in property tax breaks over their lifetimes," Field of Schemes (Feb. 7, 2024) available at: <https://www.fieldofschemes.com/2024/02/07/20905/stadiums-and-arenas-are-set-to-collect-18b-in-property-tax-breaks-over-their-lifetimes/>.

tax-exempt municipal bonds, which have cost the U.S. Treasury billions in foregone revenue.²⁴

Economic research find that these public investments rarely generate meaningful economic returns in terms of job creation or local growth.²⁵ “Economic research is unequivocal: These subsidies are a boondoggle for taxpayers.”²⁶

Beyond direct subsidies, major sports leagues benefit from special legal and structural advantages. Congress has granted professional football a limited antitrust exemption for pooled broadcasting rights under the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961.²⁷ This exemption effectively allows the NFL to operate as a cartel for media rights and has resulted in a massive windfall for the NFL and teams through joint sales. This statutory framework has enabled the NFL’s modern rights model, where networks buy packages of games. Notably, the Sports Broadcast Act applies to the “sponsored telecasting of the games” which, at the time the act was passed, meant free, over-the-air broadcast television.²⁸ Accordingly, the exemption, “only applies to television broadcasting rights, leaving leagues and teams in a state of legal uncertainty regarding their

²⁴ Alexander K. Gold, Austin J. Drukker, and Ted Gayer, “Why the federal government should stop spending billions on private sports stadiums,” Brookings Institution (Sep. 8, 2016) available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-the-federal-government-should-stop-spending-billions-on-private-sports-stadiums/>.

²⁵ Clark Merrefield, “Public funding for sports stadiums: A primer and research roundup,” The Journalist’s Resource (April 10, 2024) available at: <https://journalistsresource.org/economics/sports-stadium-public-financing/>; *see also* Hoffer, Johns, Depken *supra* n. 16. (“The empirical evidence shows repeatedly that stadium subsidies fail to generate new tax revenue and new jobs or attract new businesses. While attending a sporting event or a concert in a new, publicly subsidized venue might benefit fans of the team or those who attend the event, those subsidies shift spending that would have occurred in other parts of the city or state in the absence of a new sports stadium or arena.”)

²⁶ *See* More, *supra* n. 16 (“Economic research is unequivocal: These subsidies are a boondoggle for taxpayers, who have spent nearly \$30 billion on stadiums over the past 34 years, not counting property-tax exemptions or federal revenues lost to tax-exempt municipal bonds. Stadiums do not come close to generating enough economic activity to pay back the public investment involved in building them – especially when they’re coupled with lease agreements that funnel revenue back to owners or allow teams to play in the stadiums rent-free.”)

²⁷ 15 USC §§ 1291-1295.

²⁸ 15 USC § 1291.

current deals with paid services such as cable television and digital streaming services.”²⁹

Indeed, courts have held that the Sports Broadcasting Act does not exempt leagues from antitrust scrutiny for paid services.³⁰

The Sports Broadcasting Act also included broadcast timing protections designed to protect amateur football, effectively shaping the traditional broadcast calendar of college football on Saturdays and NFL games on Sundays. By reducing competition between these two products, the statute helped subsidize the market for televised football resulting in windfall fees for college and professional football. More broadly, the coordinated structure of professional leagues, combined with limited franchise supply, has long been recognized as conferring substantial market power. The NFL capitalized on these advantages to nearly double its media revenue in its most recent deals beginning in 2023.³¹

In addition, leagues and teams have benefited from various forms of indirect public support, including publicly funded security, infrastructure, and promotional activities, as well as government-supported initiatives such as military flyovers and related displays that, in some instances, have been funded through Department of Defense promotional contracts.

²⁹ Jeffrey Westling, “Congress Eyes Sports Antitrust Exemption,” American Action Forum (Sep. 16, 2025) available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/congress-eyes-sports-antitrust-exemption/>.

³⁰ *Shaw v. Dallas Cowboys Football Club, Ltd.* 172 F.3d 299, 301 (3d Cir. 1999); *Chicago Professional Sports Ltd. Partnership v. National Basketball Association*, 961 F.2d 667, 671 (7th Cir. 1992); *Kingray, Inc. v. NBA, Inc.*, 188 F. Supp. 2d 1177, 1183 (S.D. Cal. 2002) (“‘Sponsored telecasting’ under the SBA pertains only to network broadcast television and does not apply to non-exempt channels of distribution such as cable television, pay-per-view, and satellite television networks”); *In re National Football League’s Sunday Ticket Antitrust Litigation*, 933 F.3d 1136, 1147 (9th Cir. 2019).

³¹ “NFL finalizes blockbuster \$113bn media rights deal through 2033 season,” The Guardian (Mar. 18, 2021) available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/mar/18/nfl-media-rights-contracts-amazon>.

Taken together, these subsidies and advantages underscore that major professional sports are not solely private enterprises. They operate with significant public financial support and policy accommodations. Under these circumstances, the continued migration of widely popular sports programming away from free, over-the-air broadcast television to fragmented, paywalled platforms controlled by the largest, most powerful tech and media companies in the world without any substantive benefit to local communities raises substantial public interest concerns.

V. MAJOR SPORTS ARE A CRITICAL PART OF A COMMON AMERICAN CULTURE

Given the substantial public investment in sports and the significant policy accommodations from which major sports have massively profited, it is reasonable to ask, what do sports teams and leagues owe their fans? And how should policymakers respond, not only to the concerns about consumer costs and frustration, but also to the larger social concerns over the fragmentation of sports programming?

For much of the twentieth century, mass media, particularly broadcast television, helped create a shared cultural framework in which Americans consumed common content and developed a common set of references. “All nations are held together by culture,” and “pop culture was the glue that held the U.S. together,” for much of the 20th century.³² But today, “everything has splintered.”³³ This shared monoculture has largely eroded, with tech and streaming platforms fragmenting audiences into niche silos and eliminating many common cultural touchpoints. “Gone are the days when one could sit down and watch a show knowing

³² Ben Fritz, “The Rise and Fall of the American Monoculture,” *The Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 19, 2026) available at: <https://www.wsj.com/business/media/american-pop-culture-history-ce8672f1>.

³³ *Id.*

that they would be able to go in to work the next morning and talk about it with their similarly plugged-in colleagues.”³⁴

This fragmentation has social consequences. Where Americans once shared common cultural reference points, today’s media environment often produces parallel but disconnected cultural experiences. Major sports are one of the last monocultural experiences Americans share. They function as a shared civic language – one of the few topics that can be comfortably discussed across social or professional hierarchies. Sports remain a water-cooler topic: a subject that strangers can use as an icebreaker, that the most junior employee can comfortably discuss with the CEO, and a topic where neighbors with different political views can readily find common ground.

Other countries have already recognized the cultural and civic importance of ensuring broad public access to major sporting events – and have adopted policies to prevent such content from migrating exclusively behind paywalls. For example, Australia maintains an “anti-siphoning” framework that gives free-to-air broadcasters priority for acquiring rights to certain sports events “to support Australians’ free access to TV coverage of events that are of national and cultural significance.”³⁵ Similarly, the United Kingdom and Ireland maintain “listed events” or “designated events” rules that require certain major sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup, the Olympics, and other nationally significant competitions, to be made available on free-

³⁴ Logan Proulx, “(Un)Popular Culture: What We Have Lost From the Lack of Monoculture in Media,” The Bull&Bear (Nov. 21, 2025) available at: <https://bullandbearmcgill.com/unpopular-culture-what-we-have-lost-from-the-lack-of-monoculture-in-media/>.

³⁵ “Rights to major events on TV,” Australian Communications and Media Authority, available at: <https://www.acma.gov.au/rights-major-events-tv>.

to-air television.³⁶ The EU’s Audiovisual Media Services Directive expressly permits member states to designate events of “major importance for society” that must remain widely accessible on free television.³⁷ Germany has implemented such protections through its media law framework, which requires that certain major sporting events, including World Cup matches and Olympic Games, cannot be made exclusively available behind paywalls without also being broadcast on free, generally accessible television.³⁸

Maintaining the unifying cultural role of sports depends on broad and frictionless access to major sporting events. Broadcast television uniquely enables broad, simultaneous access without subscription barriers, maximizing reach and shared participation. Broadcast remains the right platform for our most popular shared experiences.

VI. THE FCC CAN TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO HELP VIEWERS RETAIN ACCESS TO SPORTS ON BROADCAST TELEVISION

Policymakers at all levels of government are examining the place of sports in the evolving media landscape. President Trump recently issued an executive order establishing the policy that no college football game should be broadcast in a manner that directly conflicts with America’s Game.³⁹ Senator Mike Lee recently sent a letter to the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission requesting a review of the Sports Broadcasting Act and its

³⁶ See “Listed sporting events,” Ofcom, available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/listed-sporting-events>; see also Broadcasting Act of 2009, § 162, available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/18/section/162>.

³⁷ Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010, 2010 O.J. (L 95) 1; see also European Commission, *Audiovisual Media Services Directive*, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/audiovisual-and-media-services>.

³⁸ See State Treaty for the Modernization of the Media Order in Germany, art. 1 (2020); see also Anti-Siphoning Law, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-siphoning_law.

³⁹ Exec. Order No. 14,396, *Preserving America’s Game*, 91 Fed. Reg. 14,639 (Mar. 25, 2026).

applicability to the current streaming media landscape.⁴⁰ The Commission can serve an important role here by gathering information that can further shape and inform policy discussions around the preservation of major sports programming on television and by making recommendations for national policy changes. In addition to compiling a record, the Commission also has immediately available policy tools it can bring to bear on this issue.

First, modernizing the Commission’s ownership rules would enable broadcasters to achieve the scale necessary to better compete for sports rights. As the Commission is well-aware, the economics of sports programming have evolved dramatically. Major sports leagues increasingly command escalating rights fees driven by competition from large, well-capitalized technology platforms. In this environment, broadcast television stations, currently constrained by legacy ownership limits, face artificial structural challenges in competing for premium sports content. Prompt Commission action on both the national and local ownership rules will remove those artificial, outdated structural limitations, allowing broadcasters to achieve the necessary scale to continue to compete for high-quality programming, including major sports.

Second, the Commission can accelerate the transition to ATSC 3.0, including by setting a firm sunset date for ATSC 1.0 transmissions. NextGen TV will enable broadcasters to offer improved picture quality, enhanced audio, and interactive features that will make broadcast a more attractive and competitive distribution platform for major sports leagues. NextGen TV also, for the first time, allows broadcasters the ability to offer content protection to rights holders – something literally every other player in the video ecosystem can already do. If broadcasters are unable to compete with other platforms on video quality and content protection, continued

⁴⁰ Letter from Senator Mike Lee to the Honorable Omeed A. Assefi and the Honorable Andrew Ferguson (March 2, 2026) available at: <https://www.lee.senate.gov/services/files/A820C118-2F19-4243-BC9E-C51A085C2D13>.

migration of sports programming to siloed and paywalled streaming platforms may prove inevitable.

VII. CONCLUSION

We commend the Commission for its attention to this important issue. Live sports programming is vital to the broadcast ecosystem, the sustainability of local journalism, and the preservation of free over-the-air service to viewers. Maintaining a broadcast presence for major sports also helps preserve one of the last widely shared cultural experiences in American life at a time when the broader media environment is increasingly fragmented and individualized. We urge the Commission to develop a full record in this matter and look forward to working with the Commission, as well as other stakeholders, to preserve Americans' ready access to the most valued programming on television.

Respectfully Submitted,

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