

48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

## SUBCHAPTER V—CABLE COMMUNICATIONS

### PART I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### § 521. Purposes

The purposes of this subchapter are to—

- (1) establish a national policy concerning cable communications;
- (2) establish franchise procedures and standards which encourage the growth and development of cable systems and which assure that cable systems are responsive to the needs and interests of the local community;
- (3) establish guidelines for the exercise of Federal, State, and local authority with respect to the regulation of cable systems;
- (4) assure that cable communications provide and are encouraged to provide the widest possible diversity of information sources and services to the public;
- (5) establish an orderly process for franchise renewal which protects cable operators against unfair denials of renewal where the operator's past performance and proposal for future performance meet the standards established by this subchapter; and
- (6) promote competition in cable communications and minimize unnecessary regulation that would impose an undue economic burden on cable systems.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, § 601, as added Pub. L. 98-549, § 2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2780.)

#### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

##### EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 98-549, §9(a), Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2806, provided that: "Except where otherwise expressly provided, the provisions of this Act [enacting this subchapter and section 611 of this title, amending sections 152, 224, 309, and 605 of this title, section 2511 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, and section 1805 of Title 50, War and National Defense, and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and sections 543, 605, and 609 of this title] and the amendments made thereby shall take effect 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act [Oct. 30, 1984]."

##### SHORT TITLE

For short title of Pub. L. 98-549 [enacting this subchapter] as the "Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984", see section 1(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as a Short Title of 1984 Amendment note under section 609 of this title.

##### CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS AND POLICY FOR PUB. L. 102-385

Pub. L. 102-385, §2(a), (b), Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1460, 1463, provided that:

"(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds and declares the following:

- "(1) Pursuant to the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 [Pub. L. 98-549, enacting this subchapter and section 611 of this title, amending sections 152, 224, 309, and 605 of this title, section 2511 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, and section 1805 of Title 50, War and National Defense, and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and sec-

tions 543, 605, and 609 of this title], rates for cable television services have been deregulated in approximately 97 percent of all franchises since December 29, 1986. Since rate deregulation, monthly rates for the lowest priced basic cable service have increased by 40 percent or more for 28 percent of cable television subscribers. Although the average number of basic channels has increased from about 24 to 30, average monthly rates have increased by 29 percent during the same period. The average monthly cable rate has increased almost 3 times as much as the Consumer Price Index since rate deregulation.

"(2) For a variety of reasons, including local franchising requirements and the extraordinary expense of constructing more than one cable television system to serve a particular geographic area, most cable television subscribers have no opportunity to select between competing cable systems. Without the presence of another multichannel video programming distributor, a cable system faces no local competition. The result is undue market power for the cable operator as compared to that of consumers and video programmers.

"(3) There has been a substantial increase in the penetration of cable television systems over the past decade. Nearly 56,000,000 households, over 60 percent of the households with televisions, subscribe to cable television, and this percentage is almost certain to increase. As a result of this growth, the cable television industry has become a dominant nationwide video medium.

"(4) The cable industry has become highly concentrated. The potential effects of such concentration are barriers to entry for new programmers and a reduction in the number of media voices available to consumers.

"(5) The cable industry has become vertically integrated; cable operators and cable programmers often have common ownership. As a result, cable operators have the incentive and ability to favor their affiliated programmers. This could make it more difficult for noncable-affiliated programmers to secure carriage on cable systems. Vertically integrated program suppliers also have the incentive and ability to favor their affiliated cable operators over non-affiliated cable operators and programming distributors using other technologies.

"(6) There is a substantial governmental and First Amendment interest in promoting a diversity of views provided through multiple technology media.

"(7) There is a substantial governmental and First Amendment interest in ensuring that cable subscribers have access to local noncommercial educational stations which Congress has authorized, as expressed in section 396(a)(5) of the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 396(a)(5)]. The distribution of unique noncommercial, educational programming services advances that interest.

"(8) The Federal Government has a substantial interest in making all nonduplicative local public television services available on cable systems because—

"(A) public television provides educational and informational programming to the Nation's citizens, thereby advancing the Government's compelling interest in educating its citizens;

"(B) public television is a local community institution, supported through local tax dollars and voluntary citizen contributions in excess of \$10,800,000,000 since 1972, that provides public service programming that is responsive to the needs and interests of the local community;

"(C) the Federal Government, in recognition of public television's integral role in serving the educational and informational needs of local communities, has invested more than \$3,000,000,000 in public broadcasting since 1969; and

"(D) absent carriage requirements there is a substantial likelihood that citizens, who have supported local public television services, will be deprived of those services.

“(9) The Federal Government has a substantial interest in having cable systems carry the signals of local commercial television stations because the carriage of such signals is necessary to serve the goals contained in section 307(b) of the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 307(b)] of providing a fair, efficient, and equitable distribution of broadcast services.

“(10) A primary objective and benefit of our Nation’s system of regulation of television broadcasting is the local origination of programming. There is a substantial governmental interest in ensuring its continuation.

“(11) Broadcast television stations continue to be an important source of local news and public affairs programming and other local broadcast services critical to an informed electorate.

“(12) Broadcast television programming is supported by revenues generated from advertising broadcast over stations. Such programming is otherwise free to those who own television sets and do not require cable transmission to receive broadcast signals. There is a substantial governmental interest in promoting the continued availability of such free television programming, especially for viewers who are unable to afford other means of receiving programming.

“(13) As a result of the growth of cable television, there has been a marked shift in market share from broadcast television to cable television services.

“(14) Cable television systems and broadcast television stations increasingly compete for television advertising revenues. As the proportion of households subscribing to cable television increases, proportionately more advertising revenues will be reallocated from broadcast to cable television systems.

“(15) A cable television system which carries the signal of a local television broadcaster is assisting the broadcaster to increase its viewership, and thereby attract additional advertising revenues that otherwise might be earned by the cable system operator. As a result, there is an economic incentive for cable systems to terminate the retransmission of the broadcast signal, refuse to carry new signals, or reposition a broadcast signal to a disadvantageous channel position. There is a substantial likelihood that absent the reimposition of such a requirement, additional local broadcast signals will be deleted, repositioned, or not carried.

“(16) As a result of the economic incentive that cable systems have to delete, reposition, or not carry local broadcast signals, coupled with the absence of a requirement that such systems carry local broadcast signals, the economic viability of free local broadcast television and its ability to originate quality local programming will be seriously jeopardized.

“(17) Consumers who subscribe to cable television often do so to obtain local broadcast signals which they otherwise would not be able to receive, or to obtain improved signals. Most subscribers to cable television systems do not or cannot maintain antennas to receive broadcast television services, do not have input selector switches to convert from a cable to antenna reception system, or cannot otherwise receive broadcast television services. The regulatory system created by the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 was premised upon the continued existence of mandatory carriage obligations for cable systems, ensuring that local stations would be protected from anticompetitive conduct by cable systems.

“(18) Cable television systems often are the single most efficient distribution system for television programming. A Government mandate for a substantial societal investment in alternative distribution systems for cable subscribers, such as the ‘A/B’ input selector antenna system, is not an enduring or feasible method of distribution and is not in the public interest.

“(19) At the same time, broadcast programming that is carried remains the most popular program-

ming on cable systems, and a substantial portion of the benefits for which consumers pay cable systems is derived from carriage of the signals of network affiliates, independent television stations, and public television stations. Also cable programming placed on channels adjacent to popular off-the-air signals obtains a larger audience than on other channel positions. Cable systems, therefore, obtain great benefits from local broadcast signals which, until now, they have been able to obtain without the consent of the broadcaster or any copyright liability. This has resulted in an effective subsidy of the development of cable systems by local broadcasters. While at one time, when cable systems did not attempt to compete with local broadcasters for programming, audience, and advertising, this subsidy may have been appropriate, it is so no longer and results in a competitive imbalance between the 2 industries.

“(20) The Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, in its amendments to the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.], limited the regulatory authority of franchising authorities over cable operators. Franchising authorities are finding it difficult under the current regulatory scheme to deny renewals to cable systems that are not adequately serving cable subscribers.

“(21) Cable systems should be encouraged to carry low-power television stations licensed to the communities served by those systems where the low-power station creates and broadcasts, as a substantial part of its programming day, local programming.

“(b) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the Congress in this Act [enacting sections 334, 335, 534 to 537, 544a, 548, and 555a of this title, amending sections 325, 332, 522, 532, 533, 541 to 544, 546, 551 to 555, and 558 of this title, and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and sections 325, 531, 543, and 554 of this title] to—

“(1) promote the availability to the public of a diversity of views and information through cable television and other video distribution media;

“(2) rely on the marketplace, to the maximum extent feasible, to achieve that availability;

“(3) ensure that cable operators continue to expand, where economically justified, their capacity and the programs offered over their cable systems;

“(4) where cable television systems are not subject to effective competition, ensure that consumer interests are protected in receipt of cable service; and

“(5) ensure that cable television operators do not have undue market power vis-a-vis video programmers and consumers.”

#### SPORTS PROGRAMMING MIGRATION STUDY AND REPORT

Pub. L. 102-385, §26, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1502, directed Federal Communications Commission to investigate and analyze, on a sport-by-sport basis, trends in migration of local, regional, and national sports programming from carriage by broadcast stations to carriage over cable programming networks and pay-per-view systems, including economic causes and consequences of such trends, and further directed Commission to submit to Congress interim and final reports of such study, no later than July 1, 1993, and July 1, 1994, respectively, along with recommendations for legislative or regulatory activity.

#### APPLICABILITY OF ANTITRUST LAWS TO PUB. L. 102-385

Pub. L. 102-385, §27, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1503, provided that: “Nothing in this Act [enacting sections 334, 335, 534 to 537, 544a, 548, and 555a of this title, amending sections 325, 332, 522, 532, 533, 541 to 544, 546, 551 to 555, and 558 of this title, and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and sections 325, 531, 543, and 554 of this title] or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed to alter or restrict in any manner

the applicability of any Federal or State antitrust law.”

**EFFECT OF CABLE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY ACT OF 1984 ON JURISDICTION OF FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION RESPECTING WIRE OR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH CABLE SYSTEMS**

Pub. L. 98-549, §3(b), Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2801, provided that: “The provisions of this Act [enacting this subchapter and section 611 of this title, amending sections 152, 224, 309, and 605 of this title, section 2511 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, and section 1805 of Title 50, War and National Defense, and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and sections 543, 605, and 609 of this title] and amendments made by this Act shall not be construed to affect any jurisdiction the Federal Communications Commission may have under the Communications Act of 1934 [this chapter] with respect to any communication by wire or radio (other than cable service, as defined in section 602(5) of such Act [section 522(5) of this title]) which is provided through a cable system, or persons or facilities engaged in such communications.”

**§ 522. Definitions**

For purposes of this subchapter—

(1) the term “activated channels” means those channels engineered at the headend of a cable system for the provision of services generally available to residential subscribers of the cable system, regardless of whether such services actually are provided, including any channel designated for public, educational, or governmental use;

(2) the term “affiliate”, when used in relation to any person, means another person who owns or controls, is owned or controlled by, or is under common ownership or control with, such person;

(3) the term “basic cable service” means any service tier which includes the retransmission of local television broadcast signals;

(4) the term “cable channel” or “channel” means a portion of the electromagnetic frequency spectrum which is used in a cable system and which is capable of delivering a television channel (as television channel is defined by the Commission by regulation);

(5) the term “cable operator” means any person or group of persons (A) who provides cable service over a cable system and directly or through one or more affiliates owns a significant interest in such cable system, or (B) who otherwise controls or is responsible for, through any arrangement, the management and operation of such a cable system;

(6) the term “cable service” means—

(A) the one-way transmission to subscribers of (i) video programming, or (ii) other programming service, and

(B) subscriber interaction, if any, which is required for the selection or use of such video programming or other programming service;

(7) the term “cable system” means a facility, consisting of a set of closed transmission paths and associated signal generation, reception, and control equipment that is designed to provide cable service which includes video programming and which is provided to multiple subscribers within a community, but such term does not include (A) a facility that serves only to retransmit the television sig-

nals of 1 or more television broadcast stations; (B) a facility that serves subscribers without using any public right-of-way; (C) a facility of a common carrier which is subject, in whole or in part, to the provisions of subchapter II of this chapter, except that such facility shall be considered a cable system (other than for purposes of section 541(c) of this title) to the extent such facility is used in the transmission of video programming directly to subscribers, unless the extent of such use is solely to provide interactive on-demand services; (D) an open video system that complies with section 573 of this title; or (E) any facilities of any electric utility used solely for operating its electric utility system;

(8) the term “Federal agency” means any agency of the United States, including the Commission;

(9) the term “franchise” means an initial authorization, or renewal thereof (including a renewal of an authorization which has been granted subject to section 546 of this title), issued by a franchising authority, whether such authorization is designated as a franchise, permit, license, resolution, contract, certificate, agreement, or otherwise, which authorizes the construction or operation of a cable system;

(10) the term “franchising authority” means any governmental entity empowered by Federal, State, or local law to grant a franchise;

(11) the term “grade B contour” means the field strength of a television broadcast station computed in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Commission;

(12) the term “interactive on-demand services” means a service providing video programming to subscribers over switched networks on an on-demand, point-to-point basis, but does not include services providing video programming prescheduled by the programming provider;

(13) the term “multichannel video programming distributor” means a person such as, but not limited to, a cable operator, a multichannel multipoint distribution service, a direct broadcast satellite service, or a television receive-only satellite program distributor, who makes available for purchase, by subscribers or customers, multiple channels of video programming;

(14) the term “other programming service” means information that a cable operator makes available to all subscribers generally;

(15) the term “person” means an individual, partnership, association, joint stock company, trust, corporation, or governmental entity;

(16) the term “public, educational, or governmental access facilities” means—

(A) channel capacity designated for public, educational, or governmental use; and

(B) facilities and equipment for the use of such channel capacity;

(17) the term “service tier” means a category of cable service or other services provided by a cable operator and for which a separate rate is charged by the cable operator;

(18) the term “State” means any State, or political subdivision, or agency thereof;

(19) the term “usable activated channels” means activated channels of a cable system,