BROADCASTERS’ POLICY AGENDA
116th Congress
MISSION

The National Association of Broadcasters is the voice for the nation’s local radio and television stations and their network partners. NAB advances the interests of our members through advocacy, education and innovation.
In every town and city across the country, broadcasters are providing their communities with investigative reports, local news and weather, emergency warnings, sports and entertainment they rely on every day.

The National Association of Broadcasters advocates on behalf of America’s local TV and radio stations and broadcast networks in our nation’s capital, ensuring their voices are heard when decisions affecting their ability to serve their communities are made.

We are pleased to share this overview of broadcasters’ critical services and our policy priorities in the 116th Congress that could impact the future of local stations.

Gordon H. Smith
NAB President and CEO

To learn more about the unique and important role broadcasters play in every community across the nation, visit WeAreBroadcasters.com and follow us on social @nabtweets and facebook.com/Broadcasters.
When disaster strikes, local radio and television stations are always there for their communities to provide breaking news alerts, round-the-clock reporting and online and social messages to keep their communities safe and informed.

Because of the strength of the broadcast infrastructure and the power of the airwaves, local radio and TV stations are often the only available communications medium during disasters, when cell phone and wireless networks can be unreliable.

Whether it’s preparing listeners and viewers for the coming storm with up-to-the-minute reports or braving dangerous conditions to provide a lifeline to their neighbors, local stations embrace their role of first informers.

FIRST INFORMERS
NEWS REPORTERS AND INVESTIGATORS

From our country’s beginning, the right of the press to challenge the government, root out corruption and speak freely without fear of recrimination has been a central tenet of our democracy.

As the most trusted source of news, America’s broadcasters take seriously the responsibility that the freedom of the press grants them under the First Amendment, shining a light on injustice and reporting the facts. Local stations’ award-winning investigative news units uncover government corruption, question those in power and expose those who abuse their positions. This valuable investigative work improves the quality of lives within communities and provides viewers and listeners with the facts they need to be informed citizens.

Even with millions of sources for information, Americans turn to local radio and television stations first for immediate access to the events that impact our communities and the world.
Broadcasters’ tremendous dedication to helping our communities sets them apart from other mediums. Each day, thousands of broadcasters support charities and victims of disasters, create awareness about important health and safety issues and help rescue abducted children with AMBER Alerts.

Broadcasters generate more than $10 billion in community service in a single year – an astounding number that reflects the work of thousands of local stations that strive every day to help their communities in unparalleled ways.
Broadcasters are investing in and rolling out new technologies that expand the delivery of their highly-valued content to listeners and viewers across emerging platforms. Through the use of an antenna, viewers have more choices than ever on broadcast radio and television – for free.

New broadcast technology platforms, such as Next Generation TV (ATSC 3.0), can deliver ultra-high-definition TV, along with interactivity, personalized services, mobility and more, providing spectacular images and immersive sound to enhance the viewer experience.

Many local radio stations are available online or through apps, allowing you to access your favorite hometown station anywhere you go. Radio broadcasters have also worked closely with mobile phone carriers to offer built-in radio in smartphones.

Broadcasters are actively working with automakers and internet service providers around the globe to develop the next generation of radio that combines broadcasting with internet connectivity to create new and engaging user experiences.

To learn more about broadcasters’ innovation initiatives, visit nabpilot.org.
As the voice of local radio and TV stations and their network partners in Washington, D.C., NAB is advocating on the issues that impact their ability to innovate and serve their communities – your constituents. To learn more about the policies that broadcasters will focus on in the 116th Congress, visit nab.org/advocacy.

Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization Expiration

Three decades ago, nascent satellite television companies were given a significantly discounted copyright license that allowed them to better compete with big cable monopolies. Under the license, a satellite company could import an out-of-market network TV station signal, typically from a major city, into a local television market where a local broadcast station could not be provided by the satellite company. At the time the license was created, the technology did not exist to enable satellite carriage of local broadcast stations in most markets and importing an out-of-market station provided viewers with their favorite network programming. Today, there are no impediments to providing satellite viewers with their local broadcast station rather than an out-of-market substitute. As noted by many lawmakers, it has always been Congress’ intent to sunset this narrow law once it is no longer necessary.

Congress should continue to advance policy goals that serve local communities by allowing the expiring provisions of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization (STELAR) to sunset.

Local Radio Freedom Act

For nearly a century, record labels and performers have thrived from radio airplay – essentially free advertising – from local stations. But as the big record labels struggle to keep their profit margins high, they are lobbying to impose a new fee on radio simply for airing and promoting artists’ music. This performance tax would jeopardize local jobs, prevent new artists from breaking into the recording business and harm the 270 million Americans who rely on local radio. Broadcasters strongly support the Local Radio Freedom Act, a resolution that opposes any new fee on local stations. In the 115th Congress, more than 250 legislators, including a bipartisan majority of the House, supported the resolution.

Broadcasters ask Congress to stand up for local radio stations and their listeners by cosponsoring the Local Radio Freedom Act.
Advertising Restrictions
Because of the unparalleled reach of local radio and TV stations in every community, broadcast advertising is an extremely valuable way for consumers to learn about new products and services, whether from a local auto dealer, mom and pop restaurant or store, or national advertisers. However, despite First Amendment protections afforded to commercial speech, broadcasters sometimes face challenges in competing effectively for advertising due to the length and complexity of the disclosures required compared with other mediums.

Broadcasters urge policymakers to ensure that any disclosure requirements comply with the First Amendment, apply equally across platforms, give consumers clearer, more relevant information and spur competition in the advertising market. Broadcasters oppose any modification to the tax treatment of advertising that would disincentivize the use of our unique medium to reach consumers.

ASCAP/BMI Consent Decrees
In 2018, President Donald J. Trump signed the Orrin G. Hatch – Bob Goodlatte Music Modernization Act into law, putting into effect the first reform of music copyright law in decades. NAB advocated for this legislation, which formally establishes a role for Congress as the Department of Justice reviews consent decrees with the two largest performing rights organizations, ASCAP and BMI. The decrees are essential to a functioning music marketplace and any action to terminate them must be preceded by appropriate congressional oversight and the implementation of an alternative framework to protect the interests of songwriters, licensees and music consumers. The Department of Justice has signaled an interest in terminating consent decrees that underpin much of the music licensing marketplace and the balance Congress has strived to achieve in the Music Modernization Act.

Broadcasters strongly oppose termination of these decrees – a move that would bring chaos to the music licensing marketplace, threatening the availability of music to consumers on every platform.

Broadcast Ownership
TV and radio stations are best able to serve their local communities when allowed to compete effectively in the marketplace. Congress recognized this in the 1996 Telecommunications Act by requiring the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to review its broadcast ownership rules every four years and to repeal or modify those no longer necessary. For years, NAB opposed the FCC’s continued application of analog regulation in the digital age, citing the explosion of new media sources, such as online video and audio services, social media, blogs and websites with which broadcasters compete for eyeballs, ears and advertising dollars. Decades old rules are simply no longer necessary to ensure competition or diverse points of view. In 2017, broadcasters applauded the FCC’s long-overdue decision to modernize local broadcast ownership rules.

Broadcasters urge policymakers to support the FCC’s modernization of radio and TV ownership rules to reflect the current marketplace and account for the rise, and increasing influence, of digital media.
CONTACT US

In the 116th Congress, broadcasters look forward to working with legislators on policies that allow local stations to thrive and compete in an evolving media landscape. For more information on the issues affecting local radio and television stations, please contact the National Association of Broadcasters’ advocacy team.

(800) 424-8806   advocacy@nab.org   nab.org/advocacy

C-band Spectrum

The C-band is a strip of satellite spectrum that radio and TV stations use every day to receive the critical national content that is contained in their broadcasts. The FCC is considering transferring some or all of that spectrum to wireless companies for new services, which could impact the programming listeners and viewers rely upon. Thousands of local TV and radio stations, cable and satellite providers and over-the-top video providers rely on C-band spectrum to deliver national and syndicated content to consumers. If not handled carefully, new uses of this spectrum could cause interference that would have significant consequences for viewers.

Congress and the FCC should ensure that any changes in C-band spectrum protect existing users and their listeners and viewers from harmful interference or loss of service entirely.

TV White Spaces

Microsoft – a $700 billion-dollar company – declined an opportunity to purchase spectrum in the recent broadcast spectrum incentive auction, yet now is asking the government to set aside an additional broadcast channel to operate unlicensed devices beyond the airwaves that have already been allocated. The company claims this would unlock broadband for rural America – a promise it has been making for more than a decade. Instead, it will put America’s ‘lifeline’ local TV service at risk when Microsoft can already utilize unused airwaves to provide broadband services in all rural communities.

Broadcasters ask Congress to reject Microsoft’s spectrum grab and ensure viewers continue to have access to the critical news and emergency information local TV stations provide.

Streaming Rates

While local radio stations are innovating to offer more services to their listeners for free, many stations still do not stream their programs online due to the high cost of royalty rates. The Copyright Royalty Board (CRB) resets the rate for streaming music every five years. NAB actively participated in the 2015 proceeding, urging the CRB to set the rate at a level that incentivizes more radio stations to stream. Broadcasters were pleased when CRB acknowledged that royalty rates needed to be reduced to encourage streaming and lowered rates for stations by 32 percent.

As the CRB prepares to reset streaming rates for the next five-year period beginning in 2021, broadcasters urge Congress to ensure fair streaming rates and regulations that make simulcasting viable for local stations across the country to the benefit of artists and listeners.