

Lonna Thompson, Association of Public Television Stations
Response to Questions for the Record on the
February 13, 2013 Communications and Technology Hearing
“Satellite Video 101”

Question from Representative Lee Terry:

Technology keeps giving consumers more and better choices for watching TV when they want, where they want it and on what device they choose. How do we make sure the Satellite Act keeps up with those demands and responds to technology?

Thompson Response:

Public broadcasting has a universal service mandate, and as such, we are committed to ensuring that all television viewers have access to the full breadth of our services no matter how they view their programming. We are proud of the fact that between a nearly 99% broadcast coverage area, the laws that govern cable and satellite carriage of our stations, and ground-breaking private carriage agreements that we have reached with almost all Multichannel Programming Distributors, Americans have many options to view their local public television stations.

Even with the growth of programming viewing options, it is critical that we do not overlook the 34 million households that are current satellite subscribers. The Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act (STELA) ensures that those households, many of which are in the most rural parts of the country, have access to high-quality local broadcasting. It is critical that any updates to the law maintain the rights of satellite consumers to view these channels.

We are very appreciative of the fact that STELA recognized the unique role that local public television stations play in their communities and ensured that satellite subscribers have access to the highest quality local public television programming.

No matter how much technology changes, we would hope that any updates to STELA continue to preserve the rights of satellite viewers to have access to the full programming and services of their local public television stations. We cannot afford to deny 34 million subscribers access to their local public television stations which deliver unparalleled children’s educational content, the best in nature and science, in-depth historical and cultural programming, unmatched public affairs programming and some of the finest dramas on television.