

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**

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(As Prepared for Delivery)

INTRO

Good morning and thank you Chairman Latta and all of our witnesses.

Today's hearing is the second this subcommittee has held to evaluate the rapidly evolving landscape of the media marketplace.

Americans have more choices than ever on how, when, and where they watch content, as well as what content they watch.

We have seen a profound shift in people's viewing habits, especially as streaming services have become more available and reliable.

For decades, the only options available were over-the-air television and cable services, where people could watch live TV at a scheduled time on a television.

Now, streaming platforms allow people to watch whatever they want, wherever they want...

...whether that's on a TV, or on the go using a phone, computer, tablet, or any device that has access to the Internet.

Streaming platforms have reshaped our entertainment habits, made our lives more convenient, and diversified the content available.

That includes the way we watch sports, which has undergone significant changes in recent years and shifted the dynamics of who owns sports media rights.

EVOLVING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Professional sports leagues, including the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL, are pillars of American culture.

For decades, these leagues have broadcast their games over the air...

...and used television to help expand their reach into homes across the country.

It allowed every American to attend their local team's game from their home for free.

With the introduction of cable TV and later satellite, the number of channels and local options for consumers increased significantly, allowing even more sports coverage.

Since then, television networks have historically held the majority of sports rights, allowing them to shape how viewers experience live sporting events.

More recently, however, this marketplace has undergone a transformative change...

...shifting from only traditional broadcast and cable TV to streaming services.

Major sports leagues are now entering into lucrative deals with online platforms.

Just this year alone, Peacock hosted the first ever “streaming only” NFL playoff game...

...Amazon Prime entered into a deal with Regional Sports Networks to air MLB, NBA, and NHL games...

...and Netflix became the new home to WWE.

The traditional cable TV model is no longer the only gateway to live sports content.

CONSUMER PREFERENCES HAVE CHANGED

People’s personal preferences are also a key factor in this transition to online platforms.

Sports fans now have the freedom to choose services that align with their preferences, whether it's live streaming, on-demand highlights, or exclusive behind-the-scenes footage.

Sports leagues recognize that they need to meet fans where they are, which is why they’re quickly moving online.

However, an increasing number of viewing options has also made it more complicated for some people to find the sporting event that they are looking for.

A recent study found that 30 percent of sport fans didn’t know which channel was airing their preferred event.

Customers may also now have to purchase different subscriptions just to watch their team play.

That means games that may have traditionally been free for someone, depending on where they lived, could now be too expensive for them to afford.

And even with all of these streaming options available, the vast majority of fans are still tuning into network television—rather than streaming—to watch live sports.

Closing

As we prepare for Super Bowl 57, it's important that we reflect on the evolving sports media landscape and how to ensure the fans' experience continues to be prioritized.

Today's discussion will provide members with the opportunity to discuss this and other issues, as well as improve our understanding of the current status of the marketplace.

We will hear expert insight into the evolution of the sports media market, as well as potential steps that Congress can take to ensure outdated regulations do not hinder innovation and competition.

I look forward to our discussion today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.