

Statement: "Examining the Sports Broadcasting Act"  
Clay Travis  
Subcommittee on Administrative State, Regulatory Reform and Antitrust  
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My name is Clay Travis and I'm a diehard sports fan who has been fortunate enough to make a living writing and talking about sports since 2004, when I successfully extricated myself from the full time practice of law and moved into sports media. For the past 15 years, I've run a sports media company called Outkick, which I sold to Fox in 2021. Outkick is now one of the biggest sports media companies in the country, producing an all time record audience of 21 million unique users in May of 2026. I've also been a local sports talk radio host on Nashville's 104.5 FM, a national sports talk radio host on Fox Sports Radio, and I currently am the co-host of the Clay and Buck show which airs every day on nearly 600 AM and FM radio stations nationwide and is the largest radio show in the country. I've been doing television for Fox Sports since 2013 and have been a contributor to Fox News since 2021.

On most weekdays, I am live on the radio, television, or digital streaming shows for at least four hours a day.

But at my root, I am, like many of you on this panel, a huge sports fan.

And I'm here today to talk with you about something that troubles me a great deal -- the rising cost of watching sports for your average fan. For too many of us across the country, sports fandom has become both unaffordable and inaccessible. That's an awful combination that must get better.

But it wasn't always this way.

When I was a kid, every day started pretty much the exact same way in my house, my dad and I would open up the local Nashville Tennessean sports page and check to see who won the games the night before and then we would check to see what games would be on television later that day.

We only had the local broadcast networks when I was a kid, so it was always a thrill to put on the TV and be able to watch our favorite teams on our local broadcast networks.

I still remember the very first sporting event I watched entirely by myself on our old television in the family den: The University of Tennessee vs. the Miami Hurricanes in the 1986 Sugar Bowl on Nashville's local ABC affiliate, WKRN. Keith Jackson, the voice of my college football youth, called the game. I was six years old and my dad and his friends were at the game in New Orleans rooting for our favorite team, the University of Tennessee. Tennessee won a thrilling 35-7 victory over the heavily favored Hurricanes. I still remember asking my mom if Tennessee had a big enough lead yet and I could relax and her telling me that my dad and grandpa always said you couldn't celebrate until the final seconds came off the clock.

From that moment I was and always have been a diehard sports fan.

And throughout my childhood, something great was happening when it came to sports, we were getting more games on the free broadcast networks and the cost was reasonable. At the same time cable and satellite services were both growing as well, expanding the sports offerings available to consumers.

By the late 1980's and early 1990's, on lazy summer days when I was home all day by myself while my parents worked, there were typically a bevy of sports options, on both my local ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox affiliates and on cable stations. The Cincinnati Reds were generally on Fox's WZTV in Nashville, Michael Jordan's Bulls teams were on NBC, the Atlanta Braves were on WTBS, and the Chicago Cubs were on WGN. Toss in Major League Baseball games available on ESPN and I heard very few sports fans complain, we were in an era when sports fans kept getting more games and the cost remained reasonable.

And that continued for my entire childhood and on into my adult life as well.

The market was serving the average fan very well.

Indeed, by 2006 sports fans had a cornucopia of games to choose from, all thanks to broadcast channels and a basic cable subscription. For less than \$100 a month, you got everything with one remote control and one cable or satellite subscription.

We had more televised games than you could have ever dreamed of when I was a kid in the 1980's.

In 2006, I made the most expensive purchase of my life -- yes, even more than my wife's engagement ring back in 2003, sorry, honey -- blown away by the vivid picture quality of new flat screen HD televisions, I spent \$4200 for a brand new 42 inch Samsung TV.

With an exquisite picture quality, I was in sports fan heaven.

You could see every blade of grass on the field!

The combination of games available for free on broadcast television and a cable and satellite bundle was a sport's fan's dream, a fair price for a great product, everyone benefited, the fan, the leagues, the players, the networks.

Then the cable and satellite bundle began to fray, streaming arrived, and things immediately started getting worse for sports fans.

Instead of getting more games for a lower average cost, we all started paying more for the same amount of games. Then, suddenly, we started paying more for less games as the streamers took away games we'd been watching on broadcast television for free.

After a generation of progress, we were going backwards -- fans were paying more and getting less.

Let me return to my flat screen television, the one I bought for \$4200 back in 2006.

This past weekend I was shopping in a Costco and you can now buy a brand new flat screen television, a whopping 75 inch TV, for \$700. In the space of a single generation, flat screen television prices have collapsed, you can now buy twice the TV for one-sixth of what I paid twenty years ago. A sports fan like me can now pay far less for a far better product when it comes to television, but the sports we watch on those television has moved in the exact opposite direction, we all pay far more for far less.

Indeed, I currently subscribe to the following cable and streaming services in order to be able to watch all the games I want to watch with my kids: Comcast XFINITY, Netflix, Hulu, Paramount, Peacock, HBO Max, YouTube TV for NFL Sunday Ticket, ESPN+, Apple TV, Amazon Prime, BravesVision, and MLB Extra Innings. (I'm sure I'm forgetting some of these subscriptions too.) My \$100 a month cable bill that used to get me everything I needed, has turned into a gargantuan bill that costs at least triple what I used to pay. I'm paying thousands of dollars more a year than I used to pay.

**AND I STILL GET BLACKOUTS ON GAMES!**

Now I'm fortunate to be able to afford all these subscriptions, but there were many times in my life when I wouldn't have been able to afford them. I have three sons today -- although one of them is an Alabama Crimson Tide fan so I'm not sure if I should count him -- but back in 2011, just before I founded Outkick, I was making \$45,000 a year with two kids under three years old. Our family could not have afforded all of these subscriptions then.

And when I was a kid my own family -- neither of my parents ever made \$50,000 a year in their entire working careers -- could not have afforded all of these subscriptions either.

This testimony, mind you, isn't even concerned with what it costs to ATTEND sporting events, this is just focused on what it now costs to merely WATCH these sporting events at home.

Put plainly, in the past generation, the progress of my youth has reversed, it is now more difficult and more expensive to watch our favorite sports teams play than it was twenty years ago.

And it's getting worse!

That can't continue.

Much of our legal foundation is built on the concept of a reasonable man. How a reasonable man responds to complex legal issues often dictates the direction of our nation's jurisprudence; I would submit that it is long past time for Congress to adopt a new standard when it comes to issues of game viewership, that of the reasonable fan.

What should we expect from a reasonable fan and what should Congress do to ensure he's not being taken advantage of by sports leagues who are exploiting laws put on the books back in

1961, when television was a new technology and its implications were just being tested, to extract more money from the reasonable fan while giving him less in return for his money?

I would submit that the absolute bare minimum a reasonable fan should expect is a fair price for a fair product.

That bargain no longer exists.

I would submit that reasonable fans have been taken advantage of over the past generation, that at some point we all started getting charged way more and getting way less, and I would submit that this is the exact opposite direction that a successful marketplace should move in a capitalistic society.

Our sports fan viewing experience is broken when it comes both to affordability and access.

Congress should, in my opinion, examine why Democrats, Republicans and independents, sports fans of all political persuasions, are paying more and getting less. In particular, they must examine whether the sports broadcasting act ever contemplated the idea of sports being placed on streaming services. Are we really prepared for a world where the Super Bowl is placed on a streaming service? It's coming if the current trajectories continue.

Why should pro sports leagues with franchises worth ten billion dollars and players making nearly \$100 million a year have antitrust exemptions at all? Why can I watch an average of ten college football games every Saturday on broadcast television, but I only get four NFL games? It feels like the fact that the NFL has an antitrust exemption for its sports broadcasts while college football doesn't, is a big reason why.

All of this should be examined through the prism of the reasonable sports fan, people like me and your constituents, regular fans who just want to be able to watch their favorite teams for a reasonable price without being extorted.

Recently I was at my dad's house.

He's 81 years old now.

He still gets the Nashville Tennessean every morning, opens the sports page, and folds open the viewer guide on the front left page so he can see which sports are on every day. He gets out his pen and marks up what he wants to make sure he watches.

All too often, the games he wants to see aren't included in his local broadcast or his basic cable package any more.

I've told him I will pay for whatever subscriptions he needs so he can see every game.

But he tells me no, he won't let me pay because it costs too much to watch all the games now and just because you have the money doesn't mean you should pay for it if it costs too much.

Even more frustrating, he tells me he doesn't want me to pay because he can't figure out how to put the games on now because one remote doesn't work for all the games and every time he tries to log in to an account his password doesn't work or there's some issue validating his account.

It's infuriating.

Every sports fan in America has dealt with an inability to get logged in so he or she can watch the games.

My dad, just like reasonable sports fans across the country, is frustrated because the games cost too much and it's harder now to watch them than it used to be.

We're all paying more and getting less.

That's wrong, we can and should do better.