

April 12, 2006

The Honorable Ted Stevens
United States Senate
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Stevens:

As the Senate Commerce Committee fashions proposals that would allow unlicensed devices to operate within the television band “white spaces,” I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) to share some thoughts and concerns.

We understand and support your desire for greater broadband availability for rural America. We recognize the appeal of the television spectrum that sits unassigned in various rural markets, and we share your goal of providing greater community and consumer access to the Internet.

The NAB and our nearly 1,100 television station members, however, are very concerned with the entry of unlicensed devices into the television band and the harmful interference that is likely to result. Allowing entry of unlicensed devices threatens consumers’ television reception. We appreciate your consideration of additional approaches to mitigating that interference and remain committed to working with you on an approach that balances protection for consumers while spurring greater access to broadband.

Second, the engineering community is involved in a process to establish technical standards and guidelines, known as the IEEE 802.22, that when completed, will offer a technical framework for unlicensed devices operation. This process is under way and on track to be completed in early 2009. We are concerned that devices that may come on the market in the interim and that are allowed to operate in the TV white space will not have the interference mitigation technologies being developed by the IEEE standard and will cause much unintended harm to television reception.

Third, through your efforts last year, the hard date for the digital television transition has been established. Between now and the date of the analog cutoff, the FCC continues its channel repacking process, its licensing of digital stations, and ultimately the transition of translators to digital operation. Consumers and television stations will have a greater degree of certainty when this process is completed. Also, television stations will have vacated and returned their analog channels, opening possibilities for alternate services in some markets.

I would ask the Committee to consider allowing the IEEE and FCC processes to be completed before permitting unlicensed devices into the television band. I would also ask

the Committee to consider an approach that involves extensive lab and field testing of candidate devices, so that we might better measure their potential to cause interference and lessen the disruption to television viewers.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David K. Rehr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

David K. Rehr