

Pub. L. 98-549, set out as a note under section 521 of this title.

§ 548. Development of competition and diversity in video programming distribution

(a) Purpose

The purpose of this section is to promote the public interest, convenience, and necessity by increasing competition and diversity in the multichannel video programming market, to increase the availability of satellite cable programming and satellite broadcast programming to persons in rural and other areas not currently able to receive such programming, and to spur the development of communications technologies.

(b) Prohibition

It shall be unlawful for a cable operator, a satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest, or a satellite broadcast programming vendor to engage in unfair methods of competition or unfair or deceptive acts or practices, the purpose or effect of which is to hinder significantly or to prevent any multichannel video programming distributor from providing satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming to subscribers or consumers.

(c) Regulations required

(1) Proceeding required

Within 180 days after October 5, 1992, the Commission shall, in order to promote the public interest, convenience, and necessity by increasing competition and diversity in the multichannel video programming market and the continuing development of communications technologies, prescribe regulations to specify particular conduct that is prohibited by subsection (b).

(2) Minimum contents of regulations

The regulations to be promulgated under this section shall—

(A) establish effective safeguards to prevent a cable operator which has an attributable interest in a satellite cable programming vendor or a satellite broadcast programming vendor from unduly or improperly influencing the decision of such vendor to sell, or the prices, terms, and conditions of sale of, satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming to any unaffiliated multichannel video programming distributor;

(B) prohibit discrimination by a satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest or by a satellite broadcast programming vendor in the prices, terms, and conditions of sale or delivery of satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming among or between cable systems, cable operators, or other multichannel video programming distributors, or their agents or buying groups; except that such a satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest or such a satellite broadcast programming vendor shall not be prohibited from—

(i) imposing reasonable requirements for creditworthiness, offering of service, and financial stability and standards regarding character and technical quality;

(ii) establishing different prices, terms, and conditions to take into account actual and reasonable differences in the cost of creation, sale, delivery, or transmission of satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming;

(iii) establishing different prices, terms, and conditions which take into account economies of scale, cost savings, or other direct and legitimate economic benefits reasonably attributable to the number of subscribers served by the distributor; or

(iv) entering into an exclusive contract that is permitted under subparagraph (D);

(C) prohibit practices, understandings, arrangements, and activities, including exclusive contracts for satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming between a cable operator and a satellite cable programming vendor or satellite broadcast programming vendor, that prevent a multichannel video programming distributor from obtaining such programming from any satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest or any satellite broadcast programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest for distribution to persons in areas not served by a cable operator as of October 5, 1992; and

(D) with respect to distribution to persons in areas served by a cable operator, prohibit exclusive contracts for satellite cable programming or satellite broadcast programming between a cable operator and a satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest or a satellite broadcast programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest, unless the Commission determines (in accordance with paragraph (4)) that such contract is in the public interest.

(3) Limitations

(A) Geographic limitations

Nothing in this section shall require any person who is engaged in the national or regional distribution of video programming to make such programming available in any geographic area beyond which such programming has been authorized or licensed for distribution.

(B) Applicability to satellite retransmissions

Nothing in this section shall apply (i) to the signal of any broadcast affiliate of a national television network or other television signal that is retransmitted by satellite but that is not satellite broadcast programming, or (ii) to any internal satellite communication of any broadcast network or cable network that is not satellite broadcast programming.

(4) Public interest determinations on exclusive contracts

In determining whether an exclusive contract is in the public interest for purposes of

paragraph (2)(D), the Commission shall consider each of the following factors with respect to the effect of such contract on the distribution of video programming in areas that are served by a cable operator:

(A) the effect of such exclusive contract on the development of competition in local and national multichannel video programming distribution markets;

(B) the effect of such exclusive contract on competition from multichannel video programming distribution technologies other than cable;

(C) the effect of such exclusive contract on the attraction of capital investment in the production and distribution of new satellite cable programming;

(D) the effect of such exclusive contract on diversity of programming in the multichannel video programming distribution market; and

(E) the duration of the exclusive contract.

(5) Sunset provision

The prohibition required by paragraph (2)(D) shall cease to be effective 10 years after October 5, 1992, unless the Commission finds, in a proceeding conducted during the last year of such 10-year period, that such prohibition continues to be necessary to preserve and protect competition and diversity in the distribution of video programming.

(d) Adjudicatory proceeding

Any multichannel video programming distributor aggrieved by conduct that it alleges constitutes a violation of subsection (b), or the regulations of the Commission under subsection (c), may commence an adjudicatory proceeding at the Commission.

(e) Remedies for violations

(1) Remedies authorized

Upon completion of such adjudicatory proceeding, the Commission shall have the power to order appropriate remedies, including, if necessary, the power to establish prices, terms, and conditions of sale of programming to the aggrieved multichannel video programming distributor.

(2) Additional remedies

The remedies provided in paragraph (1) are in addition to and not in lieu of the remedies available under subchapter V or any other provision of this chapter.

(f) Procedures

The Commission shall prescribe regulations to implement this section. The Commission's regulations shall—

(1) provide for an expedited review of any complaints made pursuant to this section;

(2) establish procedures for the Commission to collect such data, including the right to obtain copies of all contracts and documents reflecting arrangements and understandings alleged to violate this section, as the Commission requires to carry out this section; and

(3) provide for penalties to be assessed against any person filing a frivolous complaint pursuant to this section.

(g) Common carriers

Any provision that applies to a cable operator under this section shall apply to a common carrier or its affiliate that provides video programming by any means directly to subscribers. Any such provision that applies to a satellite cable programming vendor in which a cable operator has an attributable interest shall apply to any satellite cable programming vendor in which such common carrier has an attributable interest. For the purposes of this subsection, two or fewer common officers or directors shall not by itself establish an attributable interest by a common carrier in a satellite cable programming vendor (or its parent company).

(h) Exemptions for prior contracts

(1) In general

Nothing in this section shall affect any contract that grants exclusive distribution rights to any person with respect to satellite cable programming and that was entered into on or before June 1, 1990, except that the provisions of subsection (c)(2)(C) shall apply for distribution to persons in areas not served by a cable operator.

(2) Limitation on renewals

A contract that was entered into on or before June 1, 1990, but that is renewed or extended after October 5, 1992, shall not be exempt under paragraph (1).

(i) Definitions

As used in this section:

(1) The term "satellite cable programming" has the meaning provided under section 605 of this title, except that such term does not include satellite broadcast programming.

(2) The term "satellite cable programming vendor" means a person engaged in the production, creation, or wholesale distribution for sale of satellite cable programming, but does not include a satellite broadcast programming vendor.

(3) The term "satellite broadcast programming" means broadcast video programming when such programming is retransmitted by satellite and the entity retransmitting such programming is not the broadcaster or an entity performing such retransmission on behalf of and with the specific consent of the broadcaster.

(4) The term "satellite broadcast programming vendor" means a fixed service satellite carrier that provides service pursuant to section 119 of title 17 with respect to satellite broadcast programming.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §628, as added Pub. L. 102-385, §19, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1494; amended Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §301(h), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 117; Pub. L. 115-141, div. P, title IV, §402(d), Mar. 23, 2018, 132 Stat. 1089.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (e)(2), was in the original "this Act", meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

2018—Subsecs. (g), (j). Pub. L. 115-141 redesignated subsec. (j) as (g), transferred subsec. (g) to appear after subsec. (f), and struck out former subsec. (g). Prior to amendment, text of subsec. (g) read as follows: “The Commission shall, beginning not later than 18 months after promulgation of the regulations required by subsection (c), annually report to Congress on the status of competition in the market for the delivery of video programming.”

1996—Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 104-104 added subsec. (j).

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 60 days after Oct. 5, 1992, see section 28 of Pub. L. 102-385, set out as an Effective Date of 1992 Amendment note under section 325 of this title.

§ 549. Competitive availability of navigation devices

(a) Commercial consumer availability of equipment used to access services provided by multichannel video programming distributors

The Commission shall, in consultation with appropriate industry standard-setting organizations, adopt regulations to assure the commercial availability, to consumers of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, of converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, from manufacturers, retailers, and other vendors not affiliated with any multichannel video programming distributor. Such regulations shall not prohibit any multichannel video programming distributor from also offering converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, to consumers, if the system operator's charges to consumers for such devices and equipment are separately stated and not subsidized by charges for any such service.

(b) Protection of system security

The Commission shall not prescribe regulations under subsection (a) which would jeopardize security of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, or impede the legal rights of a provider of such services to prevent theft of service.

(c) Waiver

The Commission shall waive a regulation adopted under subsection (a) for a limited time upon an appropriate showing by a provider of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, or an equipment provider, that such waiver is necessary to assist the development or introduction of a new or improved multichannel video programming or other service offered over multichannel video programming systems, technology, or products. Upon an appropriate showing, the Commission shall grant any such waiver request within 90 days of any application filed under this subsection, and

such waiver shall be effective for all service providers and products in that category and for all providers of services and products.

(d) Avoidance of redundant regulations

(1) Commercial availability determinations

Determinations made or regulations prescribed by the Commission with respect to commercial availability to consumers of converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, before February 8, 1996, shall fulfill the requirements of this section.

(2) Regulations

Nothing in this section affects section 64.702(e) of the Commission's regulations (47 C.F.R. 64.702(e)) or other Commission regulations governing interconnection and competitive provision of customer premises equipment used in connection with basic common carrier communications services.

(e) Sunset

The regulations adopted under this section shall cease to apply when the Commission determines that—

- (1) the market for the multichannel video programming distributors is fully competitive;
- (2) the market for converter boxes, and interactive communications equipment, used in conjunction with that service is fully competitive; and
- (3) elimination of the regulations would promote competition and the public interest.

(f) Commission's authority

Nothing in this section shall be construed as expanding or limiting any authority that the Commission may have under law in effect before February 8, 1996.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §629, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §304, Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 125.)

PART IV—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

§ 551. Protection of subscriber privacy

(a) Notice to subscriber regarding personally identifiable information; definitions

(1) At the time of entering into an agreement to provide any cable service or other service to a subscriber and at least once a year thereafter, a cable operator shall provide notice in the form of a separate, written statement to such subscriber which clearly and conspicuously informs the subscriber of—

- (A) the nature of personally identifiable information collected or to be collected with respect to the subscriber and the nature of the use of such information;
- (B) the nature, frequency, and purpose of any disclosure which may be made of such information, including an identification of the types of persons to whom the disclosure may be made;
- (C) the period during which such information will be maintained by the cable operator;