

Mr. Robert Sachs
President & CEO
NCTA
1724 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036-1903

Dear Robert:

Thank you for your letter concerning my recent *New York Times* op-ed about broadcast coverage of this year's election campaigns. I look forward to talking with you about these issues, but thought it useful to respond now to the letter you released.

My purpose in writing the op-ed was to focus attention on a matter which I think portends serious injury to our democratic dialogue. The importance of this issue ranges far beyond jockeying for position in the debate over the must-carry obligations of cable providers, so I will not focus primarily on must-carry here.

Certainly my op-ed was not aimed at criticizing the cable industry, nor do I see how any reasonable reading of the article could lead to such a conclusion. I focused instead on broadcasters' obligations to serve the public interest in return for the privilege of receiving FCC licenses to utilize the public's spectrum. Cable is not bereft of responsibilities to serve the public interest, and there is much to be proud of on cable today. But my point remains that cable's activities do not provide broadcasters with an "out" from doing what is expected of them. As to the figures you and I cited, it appears we both understand that, with 2.58 people on average constituting a household according to the Census Bureau, well over 30 million Americans do not subscribe to multi-channel video programming. That clearly supports the point I was making.

Finally, let me reemphasize something I have often said: I applaud the investments that cable operators are making in local news channels. I look forward to the day when they realize the goals you mention in your letter so that local cable news channels will be ubiquitous and provide one additional voice in local news coverage. But with half of even the 20 largest cities lacking a local cable news channel—assuming you are not claiming that if there is *any* statewide channel that *every* city in that state should be counted as having a local cable news channel—that day appears to be a ways off.

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Even when it arrives, it will not change the need for broadcasters to meet their ongoing obligation to provide diverse sources for coverage of community events and local news.

I look forward to discussing these issues with you further.

Warm regards,

Michael J. Copps