

# United States Senate

June 14, 2012

COMMITTEES:  
BANKING, HOUSING  
AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

PSHBP  
EAS  
MSI

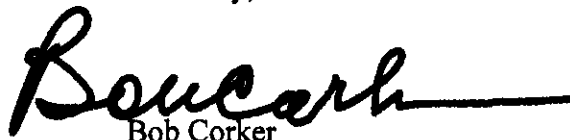
Dear Chairman Genachowski,

Local television stations are important sources for timely, often life-saving information during times of emergency. For example, during the recent outbreak of tornadoes that battered the middle of the country, Tennessee broadcasters and their staff worked around the clock to provide continuous, detailed reports on storm paths and shelter safety.

However, in Tennessee and other affected areas, Americans' access to such critical information was interrupted on many cable television systems that distribute Emergency Alert System (EAS) warnings by an override of "all programmed channels" on their system – including local TV stations – force-tuning all viewers to a single cable channel, as is conceived by current FCC EAS rules. As a result, viewers in the midst of watching their local broadcast station's meteorologist provide detailed information, such as the expected timing and street-by-street course of an approaching tornado, were switched away to another cable channel where an EAS alert with only general, county-level information was displayed.

I understand that FCC rules permit broadcasters and cable TV operators to negotiate for selective EAS overrides, thereby omitting local television stations during a cable system's EAS interruption, as part of their retransmission consent agreement. However, it appears that cable operators' concerns for cost and viewer welfare, along with other broadcaster priorities, have made such arrangements rare. Given advancements in technology, as well as the often superior safety information local broadcasts are able to provide, I respectfully request that the FCC initiate a process to engage all stakeholders to revisit the question of whether a better solution exists that could enhance public safety. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bob Corker  
United States Senator