

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Amendment of the Rules Related to Retransmission Consent*, MB Docket No. 10-71,  
Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 31, 2014)

Few Americans have heard of the term “retransmission consent.” It is one of those wonky and lawyerly things we bandy about in these halls and in this town. Fewer still know that more than two decades ago Congress prohibited retransmitting a broadcast television station’s signal without the station’s consent—and at the same time directed parties negotiating for this consent to do so in “good faith.”

But far too many Americans know what happens when retransmission consent negotiations go wrong.

First, it is pretty clear to consumers that something is not right when they turn on the television for the news, their favorite show, or the game, and instead get saddled with a dark screen. They may not know how and why retransmission consent negotiations between broadcasters and their cable or satellite company have failed, but they know a blackout means they are not getting the programming they paid for. When this happens, I think they are owed a refund.

Second, it is pretty clear to consumers that what they pay for television programming packages goes up too far too fast. I am under no illusion that retransmission consent is the main driver of increased programming costs. But it is a piece of a larger system that deserves attention.

So it is for these two reasons—the incidence of extended blackouts and the creep upward of rates—that I support today’s action. By limiting joint negotiations by local broadcasters, I am hopeful we can reduce the extent of retransmission consent blackouts. I am also hopeful we can help keep consumer rates more level. Because the record reflects that when stations jointly negotiate, retransmission consent fees are higher, and those higher charges get passed on to consumers. So I think our efforts today are a good development—not only because I am a regulator, but because I am a consumer who watches and pays bills, too.