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For Immediate Release**FCC SEEKS COMMENT ON UPDATES TO RULES
GOVERNING SIGNIFICANTLY VIEWED STATIONS*****Seeks Comment on Expanding Ways to Ensure Cable and Satellite TV Providers
Can Offer Popular Local TV Options to Viewers***

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comment on modernizing its procedures for determining whether a television broadcast station is “significantly viewed” in a community outside of its local television market and therefore may be carried in that community by cable systems and satellite operators. This could help cable and satellite TV providers include in their channel lineups out-of-market stations that are significantly viewed by over-the-air TV viewers within their local market.

While cable and satellite providers carry local broadcast stations in their channel lineups, they are prohibited in most cases from carrying more than one station from each broadcast network or carrying syndicated programming that duplicates the content on the local broadcast station. However, an exception to this rule is made when a distant broadcast station is significantly viewed in the local market by over-the-air TV viewers. This exception allows cable and satellite customers to have access to the same broadcast stations that are significantly viewed over-the-air by their neighbors.

The existing process for determining a station’s significantly viewed status was adopted nearly 50 years ago and relies on independent audience surveys of over-the-air television homes. However, there have been recent changes in how over-the-air viewership is measured, and it is uncertain the extent to which the necessary over-the-air viewership data for determining a station’s significantly viewed status under the Commission’s current rules is commercially available today.

The NPRM seeks comment on whether the current process for determining a station’s significantly viewed status has become outdated or overly burdensome; whether there are commercially available sources that are able to provide the over-the-air viewership data needed to demonstrate a station’s significantly viewed status, particularly for communities in smaller markets; what modifications or updates should be made to the current process for establishing whether a station is significantly viewed in a community outside of its local market; and whether to update the definitions of “network station” and “independent station” used in making significantly viewed determinations.

This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking continues the Commission’s efforts in its *Modernization of Media Regulation Initiative* proceeding to update its media regulations and represents the 21st modernization action launched by the Media Bureau.

Action by the Commission March 31, 2020 by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 20-41).
Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving.
Commissioner O’Rielly issuing a separate statement.

MB Docket No. 20-73, 17-105

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