

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Sports Blackout Rules*, Report and Order, MB Docket No. 12-3 (September 30, 2014)

The Commission's sports blackout rules were adopted the same year that the Baltimore Colts, St. Louis Cardinals, and Los Angeles Rams clinched their respective NFL division titles. These teams are no longer with us. We bid adieu to them years ago. It is time also to say goodbye to this agency's archaic sports blackout policies.

Our rules were put in place to help ensure that stadiums were filled with fans. This prevented cable operators and satellite carriers from carrying a game in a market where it was not otherwise available on a local broadcast channel. By protecting the gate receipts of professional teams—the primary source of team revenue at the time—the sports blackout rules helped support a community institution.

But revenues today for professional sports teams are a multibillion dollar mix of television rights, stadium naming rights, merchandise, licensing, corporate sponsorships, and luxury suites. For the life of me, I do not understand why this Commission still has rules in the middle of this mix. They are a vestige from a bygone era. It is time for us to retire them.

So I am pleased we do that today. I think this is good for sports fans. This agency should not support policies that prevent fans from watching their hometown teams on television. To be clear, even as we remove our rules, we cannot guarantee an end to sports blackouts. That is because blackouts can still be enforced by privately-negotiated contracts. But I would hope that leagues that rely on this rule—namely the NFL—find a solution to avoid blackouts. If not, I think they will risk alienating existing fans and turning off would-be fans at a time when they cannot afford to do so.

I commend my colleague, then-Chairwoman Clyburn, for initiating this proceeding and Chairman Wheeler for carrying the ball across the goal line. This has my full support.