

But the bill helps consumers in another very important way. Cable television prices were deregulated on April 1st of this year, despite the fact that effective competition to these systems was practically non-existent at that time. This bill now will allow satellite companies to compete more effectively with cable systems, and provide a real-market check on the rates they charge consumers. If cable rates continue to climb, as they have done for the past several years, consumers will be able to fight back—they'll now have a real choice for their video programming service.

Despite these benefits, it is true that in some of the smaller markets around the country, satellite companies will not provide local broadcast signals right away. This is due to technical capacity limitations that currently exist. In those smaller markets, consumers who subscribe to satellite TV will still be required to get their local stations over-the-air through the use of a conventional antenna.

This raises an important question that is the subject of considerable debate. The question is whether these consumers can actually receive an acceptable picture over-the-air, through the use of an antenna. The House bill would have given the Federal Communications Commission authority to change the rules governing which consumers receive an acceptable picture, and which do not. Those who do not would be allowed to subscribe to out-of-market, or "distant" network signals as part of their satellite television service.

Unfortunately, the House position was not adopted by the Conferees. Instead, the Conference Report simply requires the FCC to study this question and report back to Congress. A study will not help consumers who want satellite service, but are denied access to network programming. I hope that the distinguished Chairman of the Commerce Committee will take swift and appropriate action when that FCC report comes back to this body with its recommended changes. These rules need to be changed if we are ever going to have truly effective competition to cable.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Conference Report, on balance, is a pro-consumer, pro-competitive piece of legislation and recommend its approval.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Conference Report on H.R. 1554, the Intellectual Property and Communications Omnibus Reform Act of 1999.

Mr. Speaker, this bill represents a significant achievement for the 106th Congress. When the Committee on Commerce began its deliberations on this measure nearly a year ago, we established that our overarching objective would be to produce a bill that creates competition with incumbent cable operators.

Because in the end, it is competition—and competition alone!—that will discipline cable operators. We tried cable rate regulation. And it failed—miserably.

But now the House stands on the brink of passing a strong pro-competition, pro-consumer bill.

I should add that, as early as last week, this legislation was headed in the wrong direction. The draft legislation preserved the status quo \* \* \* rather embracing the future and providing meaningful competition.

But during the last several days, several key provisions were included that put this legisla-

tion back on track. The Conferees included a provision that will jump-start local-into-local, and also included a provision that will permit many consumers to continue receiving two distant network signals.

With the addition of these two provisions, Congress can now genuinely represent to consumers that they will have a choice—and soon. This holiday season, for the first time, consumers will be able to go into their local consumer electronics store and purchase a true alternative to cable.

Until today, many consumers who considered buying satellite service decided not to buy it because satellite was missing a key ingredient: local broadcast channels. This legislation adds the missing ingredient. And every indication is that satellite subscribership will increase as a result.

Moreover, by phasing in local broadcasters' retransmission consent rights, this bill will jump-start local-into-local service. By this Christmas, tens of millions of satellite consumers will have access to local broadcast channels. DIRECTV alone will offer local broadcast channels to up to 50 million homes.

That accounts for about half of the nation's TV households. That's also a recipe for meaningful competition. And that's why I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this Conference Report.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me acknowledge the work of several of my colleagues on the Conference. I commend the work of Mr. TAUZIN, Mr. OXLEY, and Mr. MARKEY, as well as the commitment of Mr. HYDE, Mr. COBLE, and Mr. GOODLATTE.

I also want to extend a special thanks to the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. HATCH. He and I worked closely together these last few days in an effort to forge a bill that not only would be good for consumers, but also a bill that key industry participants could jointly support. I commend him for his fine work in this area.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of H.R. 1554, which I supported in an earlier vote on the floor. This conference report redefines the role of our telecommunications industry by establishing fair competition for those participating within this industry.

This bill is an important one for several reasons. First, because it provides the rules and regulations that will allow satellite service providers, like Prime Star and Direct TV, to compete for television services in areas that have until now, been traditionally dominated by cable companies.

In the past, satellite service providers, unlike their land-based competitors, have not been allowed to re-broadcast local television signals. The result of this inequity has seriously undermined the ability of dish providers to provide meaningful competition to cable, notwithstanding the development of small dish-based systems that are more affordable than ever before.

This bill rectifies this situation, by finally allowing satellite service providers to provide local television programming to their customers. This means that my constituents in Houston will be able to select between at least two services to satisfy their television needs. The fact that we are giving dish-providers the

ability to rebroadcast local signals, however, does not come without additional responsibility. Under this bill, dish-providers will not be able to carry only those signals that stand to earn them a great deal of profit—they must also carry all of those local signals that are required of the cable companies. After all, this bill was designed in order to erase inequities, not further them.

Another mechanism in this bill that provides for an equal footing is the non-discrimination clause, which tells broadcasters that they must make their signals available for rebroadcast by cable and satellite companies. This prevents broadcasters from altering the landscape of competition in their markets by tipping the scales in favor of one side over the other by allowing them to those who will have the rights to re-broadcast their signals.

Most of all, however, I am convinced that we are addressing a topic that is vital to our constituents. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank this bill's sponsors and those who participated in the conference on moving forward with this needed bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill, H.R. 1554.

The question was taken.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1300

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 1300.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kentucky?

There was no objection.

#### DECEPTIVE MAIL PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT

Mr. McHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 335) to amend chapter 30 of title 39, United States Code, to provide for the nonmailability of certain deceptive matter relating to sweepstakes, skill contests, facsimile checks, administrative procedures, orders, and civil penalties relating to such matter, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 335

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Table of contents.

TITLE I—DECEPTIVE MAIL PREVENTION  
AND ENFORCEMENT

Sec. 101. Short title.