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*** * * Press Statement * * ***

ITTA Applauds Congresswoman Eshoo's Efforts to Reform the Outdated Retransmission Consent Rules

(WASHINGTON) The following statement was released by the Independent Telephone & Telecommunications Alliance (ITTA), and may be attributed to Genny Morelli, President of ITTA:

“ITTA applauds Congresswoman Eshoo’s efforts to reform the outdated retransmission consent rules with release today of the Video Consumers Have Options in Choosing Entertainment (Video CHOICE) Act of 2013. Consumers should not be denied access to programming available over the public airwaves as a result of retransmission consent disputes between private commercial entities. The draft legislation would provide a workable solution to this increasingly pervasive problem and prevent blackouts of broadcast programming by providing for interim carriage of such programming during impasses in retransmission consent negotiations between programmers and video programming distributors (VPDs). The draft bill also would enable VPDs to provide greater choice and flexibility to their customers through a provision that would prohibit programmers from making VPDs purchase their broadcast-owned or affiliated cable programming as a condition for receiving broadcast programming.

ITTA has long supported a standstill provision and wholesale unbundling as solutions that would help fix the broken retransmission consent process. Marketplace developments over the past two decades have tilted the playing field in favor of broadcasters and other programmers, requiring regulatory and/or legislative intervention to ensure that programmers offer fair and reasonable terms to video distributors. Such reform is particularly important for new entrant VPDs like ITTA member companies who must be able to acquire essential content, such as broadcasts by local stations, on reasonable rates, terms, and conditions to be able to compete effectively and provide desired services to consumers. The key provisions of the Video CHOICE Act are an important first step toward comprehensive, necessary, and long overdue reform of the video marketplace.

ITTA is optimistic that the draft legislation will encourage debate on video issues and lay the groundwork for expanding the discussion to other important and meaningful solutions for video reform, including repeal of the network nonduplication and syndicated exclusivity rules and additional flexibility for VPDs to offer consumers alternative broadcast programming options by importing distant broadcast signals. We look forward to continuing to work with policymakers to address the rising costs of programming for video programming distributors and their customers and ensure that consumers receive the benefits of increased competition in the video marketplace.”

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ITTA represents mid-size communications companies that provide a broad range of high quality wireline and wireless voice, broadband, Internet, and video services in 44 states. For more information, please visit www.itta.us.