



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE
48TH DISTRICT
OSWEGO, JEFFERSON, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTIES

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SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

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MEMBER
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON
RURAL RESOURCES

January 13, 2012

Hon. George D. Maziarz
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunications
Legislative Office Building, Room 708
Albany, NY 12247

RE: Consumer Protections in Television Carriage Dispute Cases

Dear Senator Maziarz:

Today’s action removing Syracuse-based WSyr-TV’s signal from Verizon’s FiOS television service highlights a disturbing recent trend of carriage disputes that are leaving consumers without access to programming and services that they expect—and for which they already have paid.

A two-week dispute between Time Warner Cable and the MSG network has stranded millions of Rangers and Sabres hockey, and New York Knicks basketball fans across Upstate New York since New Year’s Day. Last year, Mets fans were disappointed to lose coverage of their favorite team on Dish network, while Cablevision customers won’t soon forget the missed World Series games that resulted from a dispute between the provider and Fox Sports in 2010.

In each case, viewers and customers were given little advance notice of the program changes. Contrast these actions with those of another well-known provider that chose to continue airing Yankees broadcasts even while its own six-day dispute with the YES network was ongoing.

I understand that each of these cases involves contract disputes among private companies, but it’s undeniable that it’s consumers who are ultimately paying the price, both in fees for services that they can’t access, and in the deep disappointment they experience by missing favorite events and programs.

REPLY TO: **ALBANY OFFICE:** ROOM 815 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247 (518) 455-3438
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I am writing to you to urgently request that the Energy and Telecommunications Committee, on which I currently serve, convene a hearing to investigate these matters, to determine if our current laws, investigatory and oversight powers are sufficient to protect consumers who are impacted by these decisions.

While we are all hopeful that the ongoing disputes can be resolved quickly, it is also important that we take steps to ensure that the interests of consumers and viewers are also adequately addressed.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patty Ritchie", is written over a large, loopy blue scribble.

Patty Ritchie
State Senator