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Thank you. I appreciate this opportunity to talk about broadcasters' vital role in protecting the First Amendment and serving America's local communities.

Just a few days ago, Americans celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

On that unforgettable day, an estimated 650 million people around the world tuned into their televisions as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon. Families and friends took a collective breath as they listened to Armstrong utter these memorable words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

One-fifth of the world's population watched the live televised image of the moon landing that day, with millions of others also listening to the event on their radios.

As we reflect upon this special anniversary, I and we are reminded of how broadcasters are always there to capture the most indelible moments in history. Broadcasters have the unique ability to bring us together as a nation like no other medium can.

The world has changed dramatically in the five decades since the Apollo 11 moon landing. Indeed, the media landscape seems to have changed in the blink of an eye, and continues to rapidly progress.

Today, in addition to local radio and television stations, there are

a multitude of sources of information and content, giving consumers an overwhelming number of options and creating greater competition.

Ten years ago, there were nearly 240 million websites. Today, there are more than 1.6 billion.

The rise of social media has presented another platform for people to connect with each other, share and gain information and express opinions. 500 million Tweets are sent a day and 1.56 billion people a day log onto Facebook.

And though the number of people who are using social media as a source for news is growing, sorting fact from fiction has become more challenging on these platforms.

In my two decades as a public servant and now more than a decade as a broadcaster, I have witnessed the growing influence of social media and wonder if it's no coincidence that we have also seen the rise of divisive politics. In my last Senate campaign, in 2008, the glue of civility seemed to come apart in our civic discourse and a decade later, it has only gotten worse.

Though the rise of social media can be seen as democratizing, giving a greater number of people the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions in an open forum, I believe it has also been a destabilizing force that has impacted our society in troubling ways. The paradox of social media – democratizing, yet destabilizing. Again, I am a witness...

There doesn't seem to be an appetite for civil discourse on these platforms. Rather, one can more easily find heated debates fueled by name calling...or rumors and gossip that try to pass as journalistic news, and, unfortunately, sometimes succeed.

And what you find on pay TV can also be unsettling... there the so-called news is fraught with partisan bickering, where the end-goal seems to be having the last word.

Sadly, we have become a more fragmented society where the winners and losers are quickly identified minute-by-minute on

social media and where the truth and thoughtful debate are suppressed by the proliferation of fake news and false accounts.

Not surprisingly, a recent Ballast Research survey revealed that only two percent of policymakers believe social media is committed to hard facts...and 90 percent believe that social media is part of the so called "fake news" problem.

It is a challenging time in the news industry where our citizens are overwhelmed by so much information and confused about finding the truth. That is why I believe broadcast radio and television are more important today than they have ever been.

Broadcasters give our communities coherence – survey after survey show that people trust their local stations that deliver the news accurately and without bias.

Local stations' investigations protect consumers from scams and their reporting of local elections help voters make informed decisions.

Broadcast networks provide high-quality and hard-hitting investigative stories and thoughtful public affairs programming such as "60 Minutes," "Meet the Press" and "This Week," and presidential debates, that keep citizens informed and hold elected officials accountable for their actions.

It's unfortunate that at a time when this trusted information is so critical to our communities, some of our pay-TV partners, like AT&T and DISH, seem to be purposefully withholding broadcast signals from viewers – making them pawns in a political game that aims to upend the retransmission consent system.

Is their goal to manufacture the appearance of a "broken system" to encourage Congress to intervene just as it deliberates the upcoming STELAR expiration? If so, that is a dangerous game and one that hurts viewers – their customers – the most.

But, sadly, it's not all that surprising. After all, AT&T and DISH are the same companies that have been responsible for more than four out of five retransmission consent disruptions industry-

wide over the past eight years.

AT&T is the same company that is currently making decisions to withhold its content from viewers on competing platforms in the immediate aftermath of a merger where they committed just the opposite to regulators.

It is the same company asking for exorbitant fees for their own content offerings, while refusing to fairly compensate broadcasters' highest-rated programming.

And finally, AT&T is the same 300 billion dollar company that for years has chosen to exploit STELAR's distant signal license rather than invest in the communities they serve by failing to offer those subscribers their local broadcast stations.

For example, how does seeing the weather forecast from New York City help the viewer in Bowling Green, Kentucky, when a life-threatening storm is on its way to their town? It's time to let STELAR expire. Let's stop subsidizing billion-dollar companies, like AT&T, and instead ensure all Americans have access to the most accurate and timely source of news, sporting events, weather and emergency information – their local TV broadcasters.

The simple fact is, the retransmission consent process is a free-market system that works. Ninety-nine percent of all deals get done without interruption. And, my guess is that 100 percent would get reached if pay-TV companies do not purposefully try to create a problem simply so Congress attempts to "fix" it to their benefit.

If not for the compensation broadcasters receive for their highly-valued programming – programming that AT&T, DISH and others re-sell to customers – broadcasters would be unable to support investigative journalism and expensive sports coverage and invest in sophisticated weather operations that save lives and provide in-depth local news coverage.

It is our hope that policymakers will remember that, while our over-the-air programming is free to the viewer, our content is

expensive. It is all paid for from two sources – advertising and retransmission consent.

Even in today's hyper-competitive media environment, broadcast programming remains the most watched. Last year, 95 of the 100 most watched shows aired on broadcast television. And while no one denies that retransmission consent fees have increased, broadcast stations still remain under-compensated relative to the viewership of their video competitors.

AT&T collects 6 billion dollars annually in affiliate fees from its own Warner Media cable properties like TNT, TBS, CNN and Cartoon Network. And yet, these cable networks' ratings pale in comparison to the ratings of local broadcast affiliates. Last year, the typical Big Four TV broadcast affiliate delivered on average nearly four times more viewers every night than even the most-watched Warner Media channel.

Beyond the highest-rated entertainment programming, broadcasters are carrying the mantle of investigative journalism at a time when local newspapers are closing up shop and unreliable information is free flowing on social media. Broadcasters continue to be a beacon of our First Amendment, and retransmission consent revenue enables broadcasters to protect these precious rights.

CBS anchor Walter Cronkite once said, "Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy."

Our steadfast belief in this inspires us to join our friends at the Media Institute in fiercely defending our First Amendment rights, and relentlessly pursuing and reporting the facts without fear or favor.

No other media industry – not social media or the big technology companies – will ever have local broadcasters' commitment to the investigative journalism that exposes government corruption and other abuses of power.

And, no other media industry will ever match broadcasters' commitment to providing a lifeline when disaster strikes.

None of our competitors will ever have what broadcasters have that make us so unique – our connection to local communities.

As broadcasters' advocates in our nation's capital, NAB is ensuring that policymakers and the rest of America truly understand the many ways local stations give back...and our desire to always be there for our communities is what inspires us to constantly innovate.

The development of new technologies means more platforms for broadcast journalists to deliver the stories our communities rely on every day for free.

We are excited about Next Generation Television, also known as ATSC 3.0, and the convergence of over-the-air and over-the-top, resulting in an enhanced viewing experience.

We're also actively working with automakers and internet service providers from around the globe to develop the next generation of radio, which combines broadcasting with internet connectivity to create new user experiences in the connected car.

Winning our legislative and regulatory battles on Capitol Hill and at the Federal Communications Commission ensures broadcasters will be able to capitalize on future innovations and continue to flourish for generations to come.

And, in order for broadcasters to provide new technologies to better serve our communities, we also need to be competitive with tech companies and the media and telecommunications industries. This means broadcasters need the freedom to quickly develop new products and services without unnecessary regulations.

Lawmakers can enable broadcasters to better compete and to support journalism in this challenging landscape by modernizing outdated broadcast regulations that prevent us from competing on a level playing field with these behemoth tech and pay-TV companies.

This is essential to ensuring broadcast journalism thrives at a

time when communities need it most.

I am reminded of what Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in his 1919 dissent in the Supreme Court case *Abrams vs. United States*, "...the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market..."

I believe there is an antidote to this age of so-called fake news: More truthful journalism, which broadcasters can provide...and making it available on every device.

Broadcasters are making great strides in this effort.

And, though we grapple with the challenges to investigative and truthful journalism posed by social media and big tech companies, we remain energized by the innovations shaping the future of broadcast. We will continue to work to ensure both radio and TV are available wherever listeners and viewers are.

In another 50 years, broadcasting will continue to evolve, but there are some things technology will never change.

Our communities will always turn to their local TV and radio stations to follow the inspiring events that have shaped our nation.

They will always count on us to be their eyes and ears... to guide them to safety during times of crisis... to share life's greatest moments... and to connect to families, friends and neighbors.

They will always count on us to be the megaphones for freedom and democracy.

And, broadcasters will always be there for our communities, whenever and however they need us most.

Thank you.

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About NAB The National Association of Broadcasters is the premier advocacy association for America's broadcasters. NAB advances radio and television interests in legislative, regulatory and public affairs. Through advocacy, education and innovation, NAB enables broadcasters to best serve their communities, strengthen their businesses and seize new opportunities in the digital age. Learn more at www.nab.org.

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