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October 3, 2016

The Honorable Ron Johnson
United States Senate
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

I write today regarding a Petition for Special Relief filed with the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) by Gray Television Licensee, LLC (“Gray TV”) seeking modification of certain satellite television markets in Wisconsin pursuant to the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization (“STELAR Act”).

I appreciate your leadership on market modification issues and the commitment you have to your constituents to ensure they are receiving local news and programming. DIRECTV evaluated Gray TV’s petition and relevant zip codes, and intends to comply with the intent of the STELAR Act by supporting the proposed modifications subject to constraints of our spot beam coverage.

As you know, satellite carriers are permitted to retransmit signals of local broadcast television stations in specific DMAs as defined and assigned by the Nielsen Company (“Nielsen”). The Commission has recognized that, often times, Nielsen DMAs are imperfect and contain counties from multiple states, suggesting that market modifications in such DMAs could be appropriate to provide viewers with the most local programming. The STELAR Act expanded the Commission’s market modification authority by including local markets for satellite carriage and required the Commission to establish a process for accepting satellite market modification petitions. Notably, the STELAR Act does not require a satellite carrier to carry a station if it is “not technically and economically feasible” based on the carrier’s current satellites.

In its petition, Gray TV seeks modification of WSAW-TV’s local market satellite carriage to include Iron County and Ashland County, Wisconsin. DIRECTV supports Gray TV’s modifications where they are technically feasible, namely Iron County and four of the eleven zip codes covering Ashland County. However, for the remaining seven zip codes in Ashland County, DIRECTV engineers determined that providing carriage would be technically infeasible because the spot beam on which WSAW-TV is carried does not cover these particular zip codes of Ashland County.

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I hope these market modifications will offer many of your constituents in-state stations that cover local news and sports. Again, thank you for leading on this issue. I look forward to working with you and your staff to best serve your constituents. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim McKone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "J".