



ATLANTIC BROADBAND LEASED ACCESS INFORMATION

1. Commercial Leased Access Contacts
2. Summary of the Leased Access Law
3. Commercial Leased Access Statute
4. Copy of Applicable Regulations of the Federal Communications Commission

1. COMMERCIAL LEASED ACCESS CONTACTS

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2. SUMMARY OF COMMERCIAL LEASED ACCESS LAW

The commercial leased access requirements are set forth in Section 612 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (“Communications Act”). The statute and corresponding leased access rules require a cable operator to set aside channel capacity for commercial use by unaffiliated video programmers. Congress established leased access set-aside requirements in proportion to a system’s total activated channel capacity. Cable operators with fewer than 36 channels must set aside channels for commercial use only if required to do so by a franchise agreement in effect as of the enactment of Section 612. Operators with 36 to 54 activated channels must set aside 10 percent of those channels not otherwise required for use or prohibited from use by federal law or regulation. Operators with 55 to 100 activated channels must set aside 15 percent of those channels not otherwise required for use or prohibited from use by federal law or regulation. Cable operators with more than 100 activated channels must designate 15 percent of such channels for commercial use. Cable operators are not required to remove services that were being provided on July 1, 1984, in order to comply with the statute. The Commission has adopted a leased access rate formula and customer service obligations that require minimal standards and equal treatment of leased access programmers with other programmers and requires annual reporting of leased access statistics. The Commission has also adopted expedited time frames for resolution of complaints and to improve the discovery process. The newly adopted rate methodology, which will not be effective before May 28, 2008, does not apply to programmers that predominantly transmit sales presentations or program length commercials.

3. COMMERCIAL LEASED ACCESS STATUTE: 47 U.S.C. 532

Sec. 532. Cable channels for commercial use

(a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to promote competition in the delivery of diverse sources of video programming and to assure that the widest possible diversity of information sources are made available to the public from cable systems in a manner consistent with growth and development of cable systems.

(b) Designation of channel capacity for commercial use

(1) A cable operator shall designate channel capacity for commercial use by persons unaffiliated with the operator in accordance with the following requirements:

(A) An operator of any cable system with 36 or more (but not more than 54) activated channels shall designate 10 percent of such channels which are not otherwise required for use (or the use of which is not prohibited) by Federal law or regulation.

(B) An operator of any cable system with 55 or more (but not more than 100) activated channels shall designate 15 percent of such channels which are not otherwise required for use (or the use of which is not prohibited) by Federal law or regulation.

(C) An operator of any cable system with more than 100 activated channels shall designate 15 percent of all such channels.

(D) An operator of any cable system with fewer than 36 activated channels shall not be required to designate channel capacity for commercial use by persons unaffiliated with the operator, unless the cable system is required to provide such channel capacity under the terms of a franchise in effect on October 30, 1984.

(E) An operator of any cable system in operation on October 30, 1984, shall not be required to remove any service actually being provided on July 1, 1984, in order to comply with this section, but shall make channel capacity available for commercial use as such capacity becomes available until such time as the cable operator is in full compliance with this section.

(2) Any Federal agency, State, or franchising authority may not require any cable system to designate channel capacity for commercial use by unaffiliated persons in excess of the capacity specified in paragraph (1), except as otherwise provided in this section.

(3) A cable operator may not be required, as part of a request for proposals or as part of a proposal for renewal, subject to section 546 of this title, to designate channel capacity for any use (other than commercial use by unaffiliated persons under this section) except as provided in sections 531 and 557 of this title, but a cable operator may offer in a franchise, or proposal for renewal thereof, to provide, consistent with applicable law, such capacity for other than commercial use by such persons.

(4) A cable operator may use any unused channel capacity designated pursuant to this section until the use of such channel capacity is obtained, pursuant to a written agreement, by a person unaffiliated with the operator.

(5) For the purposes of this section, the term "commercial use" means the provision of video programming, whether or not for profit.

(6) Any channel capacity which has been designated for public, educational, or governmental use may not be considered as designated under this section for commercial use for purpose of this section.

(c) Use of channel capacity by unaffiliated persons; editorial control; restriction on service; rules on rates, terms, and conditions

(1) If a person unaffiliated with the cable operator seeks to use channel capacity designated pursuant to subsection (b) of this section for commercial use, the cable operator shall establish, consistent with the purpose of this section and with rules prescribed by the Commission under paragraph (4), the price, terms, and conditions of such use which are at least sufficient to assure that such use will not adversely affect the operation, financial condition, or market development of the cable system.

(2) A cable operator shall not exercise any editorial control over any video programming provided pursuant to this section, or in any other way consider the content of such programming, except that a cable operator may refuse to transmit any leased access program or portion of a leased access program which contains obscenity, indecency, or nudity and may consider such content to the minimum extent necessary to establish a reasonable price for the commercial use of designated channel capacity by an unaffiliated person.

(3) Any cable system channel designated in accordance with this section shall not be used to provide a cable service that is being provided over such system on October 30, 1984, if the provision of such programming is intended to avoid the purpose of this section.

(4) (A) The Commission shall have the authority to –

(i) the maximum reasonable rates that a cable operator may establish pursuant to paragraph (1) for commercial use of designated channel capacity, including the rate charged for the billing of rates to subscribers and for the collection of revenue from subscribers by the cable operator for such use;

(ii) establish reasonable terms and conditions for such use, including those for billing and collection; and (iii) establish procedures for the expedited resolution of disputes concerning rates or carriage under this section.

(B) Within 180 days after October 5, 1992, the Commission shall establish rules for determining maximum reasonable rates under subparagraph (A)(i), for establishing terms and conditions under subparagraph (A)(ii), and for providing procedures under subparagraph (A)(iii).

(d) Right of action in district court; relief; factors not to be considered by court Any person aggrieved by the failure or refusal of a cable operator to make channel capacity available for use pursuant to this section may bring an action in the district court of the United States for the judicial district in which the cable system is located to compel that such capacity be made available. If the court finds that the channel capacity sought by such person has not been made available in accordance with this section, or finds that the price, terms, or conditions established by the cable operator are unreasonable, the court may order such system to make available to such person the channel capacity sought, and further determine the appropriate price, terms, or conditions for such use consistent with subsection (c) of this section, and may award actual damages if it deems such relief appropriate. In any such action, the court shall not consider any price, term, or condition established between an operator and an affiliate for comparable services.

(e) Petition to Commission; relief

(1) Any person aggrieved by the failure or refusal of a cable operator to make channel capacity available pursuant to this section may petition the Commission for relief under this subsection upon a showing of prior adjudicated violations of this section. Records of previous adjudications resulting in a court determination that the operator has violated this section shall be considered as sufficient for the showing necessary under this subsection. If the Commission finds that the channel capacity sought by such person has not been made available in accordance with this section, or that the price, terms, or conditions established by such system are unreasonable under subsection (c) of this section, the Commission shall, by rule or order, require such operator to make available such channel capacity under price, terms, and conditions consistent with subsection (c) of this section.

(2) In any case in which the Commission finds that the prior adjudicated violations of this section constitute a pattern or practice of violations by an operator, the Commission may also establish any further rule or order necessary to assure that the operator provides the diversity of information sources required by this section.

(3) In any case in which the Commission finds that the prior adjudicated violations of this section constitute a pattern or practice of violations by any person who is an operator of more than one cable system, the Commission may also establish any further rule or order necessary to assure that such person provides the diversity of information sources required by this section.

(f) Presumption of reasonableness and good faith In any action brought under this section in any Federal district court or before the Commission, there shall be a presumption that the price, terms, and conditions for use of channel capacity designated pursuant to subsection (b) of this section are reasonable and in good faith unless shown by clear and convincing evidence to the contrary.

(g) Promulgation of rules. Notwithstanding sections 541(c) and 543(a) of this title, at such time as cable systems with 36 or more activated channels are available to 70 percent of households within the United States and are subscribed to by 70 percent of the households to which such systems are available, the Commission may promulgate any additional rules necessary to provide diversity of information sources. Any rules promulgated by the Commission pursuant to this subsection shall not preempt authority expressly granted to franchising authorities under this subchapter.

(h) Cable service unprotected by Constitution. Any cable service offered pursuant to this section shall not be provided, or shall be provided subject to conditions, if such cable service in the judgment of the franchising authority or the cable operator is obscene, or is in conflict with community standards in that it is lewd, lascivious, filthy, or indecent or is otherwise unprotected by the Constitution of the United States. This subsection shall permit a cable operator to enforce prospectively a written and published policy of prohibiting programming that the cable operator reasonably believes describes or depicts

sexual or excretory activities or organs in a patently offensive manner as measured by contemporary community standards.

(i) Programming from qualified minority or educational programming sources

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a cable operator required by this section to designate channel capacity for commercial use may use any such channel capacity for the provision of programming from a qualified minority programming source or from any qualified educational programming source, whether or not such source is affiliated with the cable operator. The channel capacity used to provide programming from a qualified minority programming source or from any qualified educational programming source pursuant to this subsection may not exceed 33 percent of the channel capacity designated pursuant to this section. No programming provided over a cable system on July 1, 1990, may qualify as minority programming or educational programming on that cable system under this subsection.

(2) For purposes of this subsection, the term "qualified minority programming source" means a programming source which devotes substantially all of its programming to coverage of minority viewpoints, or to programming directed at members of minority groups, and which is over 50 percent minority-owned, as the term "minority" is defined in section 309 (i)(3)(C)(ii) of this title.

(3) For purposes of this subsection, the term "qualified educational programming source" means a programming source which devotes substantially all of its programming to educational or instructional programming that promotes public understanding of mathematics, the sciences, the humanities, and the arts and has a documented annual expenditure on programming exceeding \$15,000,000. The annual expenditure on programming means all annual costs incurred by the programming source to produce or acquire programs which are scheduled to be televised, and specifically excludes marketing, promotion, satellite transmission and operational costs, and general administrative costs.

(4) Nothing in this subsection shall substitute for the requirements to carry qualified noncommercial educational television stations as specified under section 535 of this title.

(j) Single channel access to indecent programming

(1) Within 120 days following October 5, 1992, the Commission shall promulgate regulations designed to limit the access of children to indecent programming, as defined by Commission regulations, and which cable operators have not voluntarily prohibited under subsection (h) of this section by –

(A) requiring cable operators to place on a single channel all indecent programs, as identified by program providers, intended for carriage on channels designated for commercial use under this section;

(B) requiring cable operators to block such single channel unless the subscriber requests access to such channel in writing; and

(C) requiring programmers to inform cable operators if the program would be indecent as defined by Commission regulations.

(2) Cable operators shall comply with the regulations promulgated pursuant to paragraph (1).

4. COMMERCIAL LEASED ACCESS REGULATIONS

Title 47: Telecommunication

[PART 76—MULTICHANNEL VIDEO AND CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE](#)

[Subpart N—Cable Rate Regulation](#)

§ 76.970 Commercial leased access rates.

(a) Cable operators shall designate channel capacity for commercial use by persons unaffiliated with the operator in accordance with the requirement of 47 U.S.C. 532. For purposes of 47 U.S.C. 532(b)(1)(A) and (B), only those channels that must be carried pursuant to 47 U.S.C. 534 and 535 qualify as channels that are required for use by Federal law or regulation. For cable systems with 100 or fewer channels, channels that cannot be used due to technical and safety regulations of the Federal Government (e.g., aeronautical channels) shall be excluded when calculating the set-aside requirement.

(b) In determining whether an entity is an “affiliate” for purposes of commercial leased access, entities are affiliated if either entity has an attributable interest in the other or if a third party has an attributable interest in both entities.

(c) Attributable interest shall be defined by reference to the criteria set forth in Notes 1–5 to §76.501 provided, however, that:

(1) The limited partner and LLC/LLP/RLLP insulation provisions of Note 2(f) shall not apply; and

(2) The provisions of Note 2(a) regarding five (5) percent interests shall include all voting or nonvoting stock or limited partnership equity interests of five (5) percent or more.

(d) The maximum commercial leased access rate that a cable operator may charge to programmers that predominantly transmit sales presentations or program length commercials for full-time channel placement on a tier exceeding a subscriber penetration of 50 percent is the average implicit fee for full-time channel placement on all such tier(s).

(e) The average implicit fee identified in paragraph (d) of this section for a full-time channel on a tier with a subscriber penetration over 50 percent shall be calculated by first

calculating the total amount the operator receives in subscriber revenue per month for the programming on all such tier(s), and then subtracting the total amount it pays in programming costs per month for such tier(s) (the “total implicit fee calculation”). A weighting scheme that accounts for differences in the number of subscribers and channels on all such tier(s) must be used to determine how much of the total implicit fee calculation will be recovered from any particular tier. The weighting scheme is determined in two steps. First, the number of subscribers is multiplied by the number of channels (the result is the number of “subscriber-channels”) on each tier with subscriber penetration over 50 percent. For instance, a tier with 10 channels and 1,000 subscribers would have a total of 10,000 subscriber-channels. Second, the subscriber-channels on each of these tiers is divided by the total subscriber-channels on all such tiers. Given the percent of subscriber-channels for the particular tier, the implicit fee for the tier is computed by multiplying the subscriber-channel percentage for the tier by the total implicit fee calculation. Finally, to calculate the average implicit fee per channel, the implicit fee for the tier must be divided by the corresponding number of channels on the tier. The final result is the maximum rate per month that the operator may charge the leased access programmer for a full-time channel on that particular tier. The average implicit fee shall be calculated by using all channels carried on any tier exceeding 50 percent subscriber penetration (including channels devoted to affiliated programming, must-carry and public, educational and government access channels). In the event of an agreement to lease capacity on a tier with less than 50 percent penetration, the average implicit fee should be determined on the basis of subscriber revenues and programming costs for that tier alone. The license fees for affiliated channels used in determining the average implicit fee shall reflect the prevailing company prices offered in the marketplace to third parties. If a prevailing company price does not exist, the license fee for that programming shall be priced at the programmer's cost or the fair market value, whichever is lower. The average implicit fee shall be based on contracts in effect in the previous calendar year. The implicit fee for a contracted service may not include fees, stated or implied, for services other than the provision of channel capacity (e.g., billing and collection, marketing, or studio services).

(f) The maximum commercial leased access rate that a cable operator may charge for full-time channel placement as an a la carte service is the highest implicit fee on an aggregate basis for full-time channel placement as an a la carte service.

(g) The highest implicit fee on an aggregate basis for full-time channel placement as an a la carte service shall be calculated by first determining the total amount received by the operator in subscriber revenue per month for each non-leased access a la carte channel on its system (including affiliated a la carte channels) and deducting the total amount paid by the operator in programming costs (including license and copyright fees) per month for programming on such individual channels. This calculation will result in implicit fees determined on an aggregate basis, and the highest of these implicit fees shall be the maximum rate per month that the operator may charge the leased access programmer for placement as a full-time a la carte channel. The license fees for affiliated channels used in determining the highest implicit fee shall reflect the prevailing company prices offered in the marketplace to third parties. If a prevailing company price does not exist, the license

fee for that programming shall be priced at the programmer's cost or the fair market value, whichever is lower. The highest implicit fee shall be based on contracts in effect in the previous calendar year. The implicit fee for a contracted service may not include fees, stated or implied, for services other than the provision of channel capacity (e.g., billing and collection, marketing, or studio services). Any subscriber revenue received by a cable operator for an a la carte leased access service shall be passed through to the leased access programmer.

(h) The maximum commercial leased access rate that a cable operator may charge for part-time channel placement shall be determined by either prorating the maximum full-time rate uniformly, or by developing a schedule of and applying different rates for different times of the day, provided that the total of the rates for a 24-hour period does not exceed the maximum daily leased access rate.

(i) The maximum commercial leased access rate that a cable operator may charge for full-time channel placement, except to programmers that predominantly transmit sales presentations or program length commercials, is the lower of the marginal implicit fee for a full-time channel placement on the tier where the leased access programming will be placed or \$0.10 per subscriber per month.

(j)(1)(i) The marginal implicit fee identified in paragraph (i) of this section for a full-time channel shall be calculated by first determining the mark-up of the tier where the leased access programming will be placed. The mark-up is calculated by determining the total amount the operator receives in subscriber revenue per month for the tier, and dividing by the total amount it pays in affiliation fees for the channels located on the tier. The resulting figure is the mark-up. In cases where the cost and channels of one tier are implicitly incorporated into a larger tier, the larger tier price is equal to the larger tier price minus the smaller tier price and the channels on the larger tier are those that are not available on the smaller tier.

(ii) The monthly gross subscriber revenue per channel is obtained by multiplying the monthly per subscriber affiliation fee for each channel by the mark-up for the tier. The net subscriber revenue per channel per month for each channel is the difference between the monthly gross subscriber revenue per channel and the monthly per subscriber affiliation fee paid for that channel by the cable operator. This value represents the implicit fee for the individual channel.

(iii) To determine the marginal channels on the tier for systems with 55 or more activated channels, multiply the number of non-mandated channels on the tier by 0.15 and round to the nearest number. To determine the marginal channels on the tier for systems with 54 or less activated channels, multiply the number of non-mandated channels on the tier by 0.10 and round to the nearest number. That is the number of marginal channels. Next identify the channels with the lowest implicit fee until that number is reached. These are the marginal channels.

(iv) Finally, calculate the marginal implicit fee by taking the mean of the implicit fees of the marginal channels by summing the implicit fees of the marginal channels and dividing by the number of marginal channels. The result is the marginal implicit fee.

(2) The affiliation fees for channels used in determining the marginal implicit fee are the contractual license fee or retransmission consent fee representing the compensation per subscriber per month paid to the programmer for the right to carry the programming. It excludes fees for services other than the provision of channel capacity, such as marketing, and excludes revenues. The affiliation fees for channels used in determining the marginal implicit fee shall reflect the prevailing affiliation fees offered in the marketplace to third parties. If a prevailing affiliation fee does not exist, the affiliation fee for that programming shall be priced at the programmer's cost or the fair market value, whichever is lower. The marginal implicit fee calculation shall be based on affiliation fees in contracts in effect in the previous calendar year. The implicit fee for a contracted service may not include fees, stated or implied, for services other than the provision of channel capacity (e.g., billing and collection, marketing, or studio services).

(3) Operators shall maintain, for Commission inspection, sufficient supporting documentation to justify the scheduled rates, including supporting contracts, calculations of the implicit fees, and justifications for all adjustments.

(4) Cable operators are permitted to negotiate rates below the maximum permitted rates.

[73 FR 10690, Feb. 28, 2008]

Effective Date Note: At 73 FR 10890, Feb. 28, 2008, §76.970 was revised. Paragraph (j)(3) of this section contains information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.