



December 12, 2005

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: "A la carte" television programming mandate

Dear Majority Leader Frist,

As you know, the Senate is poised to consider a massive intrusion into the private sector by potentially mandating so-called "a la carte" pricing on those that deliver content to America's televisions. Such a move would constitute a fundamental breach of free-market principles and we urge the Senate to shun the politically expedient rhetoric driving the debate and resist this unsound policy.

Even if this move were not a major violation of our free-market principles, there is no solid evidence to suggest it will do anything to lower prices for the average consumer. In fact, according to an October 2003 report by the U.S. General Accounting Office, an "a la carte" requirement could "result in *higher* per channel rates" and "cable rates could actually *increase* for some consumers." Additionally, some worry that a government mandated pricing scheme would adversely affect the range and diversity of current program offerings, particularly the programming aimed at America's minority families. TV ONE Chairman Alfred Liggins wrote in the Washington Times last year that "[A] la carte would have a chilling effect on programming diversity in America" and "could put us and many other innovative cable networks out of business."

Conservatives stand for free-market principles and less government, not more. This “a la carte” policy represents a huge new regulatory regime imposed at a time of exciting innovation in the telecommunications industry.

We sincerely hope that you and your colleagues will reject this worrisome expansion of government control over consumers and the industries competing for their business.

Sincerely,



Grover Norquist
Americans for Tax Reform



Karen Kerrigan
Small Business Entrepreneurship Council



Tom Readmond
Media Freedom Project



Michelle Korsmo
Americans for Prosperity



Geoffrey Segal
Reason Foundation



Jason Wright
Institute for Liberty



Chuck Muth
Citizen Outreach



Tom Schatz
Council for Citizens Against Government
Waste

Kay Daly
Coalition for a Fair Judiciary

Stacie Rumenap
American Conservative Union

cc: House Speaker Dennis Hastert