

# Could The Camper Van Crowd Keep STELAR Shining?

By **Adam Jacobson** - July 30, 2019



Who knew that lobbyists on Capitol Hill representing recreational vehicle manufacturers, dealers, owners and RV parks could effectively be powerful enough to keep network signals from New York or Los Angeles on the local channel lineup in far-flung regions of the U.S. where no local network affiliate may exist.

No less than five RV groups, ahead of [this afternoon's Senate Judiciary Hearing](#) on Copyright Oversight, wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee's members urging them to preserve the provision of copyright law that allows DirecTV and DISH Network to provide Distant Network Signals to RVers.

Could such a move keep the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization (STELAR) from sunseting?

The letter, signed by the **RV Industry Association**, the **RV Dealers Association**, the **National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)**, the **Family Motor Coach Association** and the **Escapees RV Club**, calls on Congress to reauthorize *Section 119* of the Copyright Act, which would sunset at the end of 2019, absent Congressional action.

*Section 119* provides the copyright law exemption that makes it possible for RVers to access network TV programming regardless of where they happen to be traveling.

Without this exemption, the groups argue, "it would be a violation of copyright law for a satellite provider to allow an RVer to access a New York broadcast while camping at remote national park in a different market."

The letter, addressed to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman **Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)** and Ranking Democratic Member **Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.)**, was sent in anticipation of [a hearing in that committee](#) at which the Register of Copyrights, **Karyn Temple**, was expected to call on Congress to allow the law to expire.

Broadcast media's biggest voice on Capitol Hill, the **NAB**, wants *Section 119* to go away, largely because a host of rural DMAs don't get programming from the closest DMA and, instead, get a national feed. The NAB

under former Sen. Gordon Smith has been adamant that every viewer get local programming. This has led to market definition changes that have brought Denver-based TV stations to areas such as Cortez and Durango, Colo., for decades a far-flung part of the Albuquerque DMA due to historical over-the-air reception.

For an RVer, having geotargeted local broadcast channels is not so simple, as it is on such viewer platforms as the Xfinity app from Comcast. The app knows where the user is, and has the ability to restrict viewing based on the market they happen to be in.

The provision also impacts long-haul truckers with large cabs equipped with living space.

The RV groups argue that through the establishment and regular reauthorization of *Section 119*, “Congress has recognized that providing local signals via satellite to RVer in every market into which they travel is impractical, both technically, and from the standpoint of clearing the rights.”

As such, “If Congress fails to reauthorize Section 119, these RVers will lose access to the network signals, resulting in a negative impact on quality of life, safety and security for the millions of RVers who rely on this law.”

Is that true, or simply a misunderstanding of what will occur should Section 119 sunset? What about airlines, which offer the national feed to passengers based on Eastern Time Zone programming?

According to RV Industry Association Strategic Policy Communications Manager Monika Geraci, DirecTV and DISH don’t have a satellite product that can provide different local signals as people travel between television markets.

This is similar to Canadian providers including Shaw, with snowbirds using Florida RV parks able to watch all channels from home as they would in Quebec, New Brunswick, or Ontario.

Airlines likely have a private licensing arrangement, she added, as they do not compete for viewers with local broadcasters.