
Technology, Telecommunications & Energy Committee

HB 2838

Brief Description: Prohibiting professional football blackouts.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt, Schmidt, Simpson, Schual-Berke, Morris, Lovick, Sullivan, Anderson, Esser, Conway, Tokuda, Kirby and Berkey.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits professional football teams that play in stadiums funded with public money and their affiliated league from denying the local live broadcast of games played in the stadium unless a certain percentage of tickets are left unsold.

Hearing Date: 2/5/02

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background:

The National Football League (NFL) rules provide that any game that is not sold out 72 hours before the game begins is eliminated from live broadcast coverage within the team's home territory. The team's home territory is the city in which the team plays its home games and includes an area 75 miles in every direction from the city limits.

The NFL's blackout rule has a long history and has been challenged by those seeking to change the rule. In 1973, Congress adopted anti-blackout legislation that was in effect until 1975. The NFL has continued the rule as it policy since that time.

Summary of Bill:

A professional football team performing in a stadium constructed with public funds and any league, conference, or association affiliated with the team shall not deny the live local broadcast of an event within an area 75 miles of the stadium based on attendance. This prohibition does not apply if, within 72 hours of the event, the percentage of tickets not sold is greater than the percentage of construction costs for the stadium paid with public funds. If 40 percent of the stadium's construction costs are paid with public funds, then a live

broadcast could be blacked out if, 72 hours before the event, 41 percent or more of the seats remained unsold.

This prohibition does not apply to existing contracts but does apply to any extensions or renegotiations of existing contracts.

A violation of this prohibition is a violation of the consumer protection act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.