

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FCC Commissioner Says WTJX Should Be Available On Dish Network, Other Satellite TV Providers

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Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, who recently visited the territory with Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, argued in a recent post on the FCC's website that government-owned WTJX-TV, the local PBS affiliate, should be an option for satellite TV customers in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Imagine living in New York City and discovering that your pay-TV provider does not carry the local PBS affiliate and instead provides you with a Philadelphia based station. While this unusual arrangement would preserve access to some of your favorite nationally-televised PBS shows like Antiques Roadshow and NewsHour, unless you have an over-the-air antenna, it would mean missing out on the high-quality local programming

that broadcasters are required to provide their communities of license," writes Ms. Clyburn.

The FCC commissioner said the situation was brought to her attention by Ms. Plaskett while [visiting the territory in October](#), during which issues affecting the islands' residents were discussed.

"The local PBS affiliate, WTJX-TV which has been broadcasting for more than 40 years is not available to satellite customers, including a growing number of residents who have chosen DISH as their provider. In its place, DISH carries WMTJ, a Puerto Rico based station. Geographically, Puerto Rico is just over 100 miles from the Virgin Islands, but make no mistake they are very different communities, not to mention that they have a different dominate language," wrote Ms. Clyburn.

Ms. Clyburn said she met with Tanya-Marie Singh, CEO of the Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System, which includes WTJX-TV and WTJX-FM 93.1, and highlighted local shows she deemed were of "high quality," such as Face to Face with Addie Ottley, Ritmo Del Doce, and Meet the Candidates during election cycles.

Ms. Clyburn made known that WTJX-TV is not being carried by certain satellite TV providers because the territory is not in a Nielsen Designated Market Area.

"This means, in sum, that WTJX cannot elect must-carry or retransmission consent. And while I cannot compel carriage of WTJX as an FCC Commissioner, I do believe it is the right thing to do. We owe it to the people of the Virgin Islands to ensure they have access to local public broadcasting, just as those living in the continental United States, Hawaii, and parts of Alaska have come to expect and I call on the powers that be to make it happen, now," Ms. Clyburn concluded.