

# **For the Fans Act**

*Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)*

## **Overview**

There are few things that bring Americans together more than watching sports. Rooting for the home team reinforces our sense of community. However, an evolving digital landscape has turned watching sports into a costly subscription nightmare.

In their perpetual battle to boost subscriber numbers and increase their bottom line, streaming giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime are increasingly buying up exclusive broadcasting rights from major sports leagues and putting big games behind their big paywalls. Fans must now pay up to thousands of dollars per year just to watch sports, only to then encounter blackout restrictions that block them from watching games on a service they have already paid for, and local fans must navigate a complex maze of different services and subscriptions to watch their teams.

The *For the Fans Act* brings down costs and improves access for both the local fan keeping up with their home team and the sports fanatic who wants to watch every game.

## **Bill Summary**

The *For the Fans Act* improves access for consumers of professional sports broadcasts by requiring free viewing access for local fans and ending blackouts on league-owned streaming services. The bill applies to professional baseball, basketball, football, hockey, and soccer leagues. The bill makes an exception for minor league teams and leagues with fewer than eight teams. The bill does this through two main provisions:

### 1. No Blackouts on League-Owned Streaming Services

Prohibits league-owned streaming services, or “league streamers,” from the deceptive practice of charging fans a subscription fee only to turn around and blackout certain games from the platform. The legislation requires these streamers provide access to view every game live within their respective leagues. Thanks to this provision, consumers who subscribe to services like MLB.TV and NBA League Pass will no longer face blackouts when games are played in their local media market or set to air exclusively on a third-party streaming service like Amazon Prime Video.

### 2. Free Access for Local Fans

Requires professional leagues to provide access for local fans to watch all games for teams based in the state in which they reside, through a single, free option. This may include streaming on an ad-supported service or a local over-the-air broadcast.