Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PREVENTING CUTOFFS OF SATELLITE TV SERVICE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have heard from scores of Vermonters lately who are steaming mad. They have been told by their home satellite signal providers they are going to lose some of their home network satellite channels just as the new TV season starts. They have every right to be upset, because it is within the ability of Congress to unmuddle the mess that satellite viewers are facing. The public has every reason to expect Congress to get its act together to do that, and to do it quite promptly.

Under a court order, thousands of viewers, many of them living in my home State of Vermont, are going to be cut off from receiving TV stations. These are TV stations, incidentally, that they are paying to receive. We have 65,000 home satellite dishes in Vermont. The court order directly affects only those subscribers who signed up for service after March 11, 1997, but most subscribers are being warned by the signal providers they are going to soon lose several of the network channels they now receive, several of the network channels they expected to receive, several of the network channels they are paying to receive.

In a rural State like mine, there are many, many areas where the only way you can receive television is by satellite dish. This huge policy glitch is intruding right now into hundreds of thousands of homes throughout the country. It is a royal mess, and Congress and the FCC need to fix it.

I introduced a bill in March of this year with Chairman HATCH of the Judiciary Committee so we could try to resolve this issue before it became a major problem. We have tried since then to push Congress to find a solution. But many viewers have lost their signals already. We are trying to get these bills passed in the next couple of weeks to restore service and to keep other households from losing their satellite TV signals, not just in Vermont but in every State in this country.

I am pleased Senator HATCH and I have worked out arrangements with the chairman of the Commerce Committee and other Senators who have been active on this issue, including Senators DEWINE and KOHL, and what we have worked out significantly raises the prospect that Congress can soon pass a bill to prevent the cutoff of thousands of viewers this month and in October. The good news is that we hope and believe that all Senators can support our approach.

Our legislation would keep signals available to Vermonters and subscribers in other States until the FCC has a chance to address these issues by the end of next February. Our legislation will direct the FCC to address this problem for the future. In fact, our proposal ultimately will mean, as technology advances, that Vermonters will be able to receive satellite TV for all Vermont full-power TV stations, and viewers in other States will be similarly protected. Where this helps all of us is that this effort will eventually promote head-to-head competition between cable and satellite TV providers.

The goal is to provide satellite TV viewers at home in Vermont with more choices, more channel selections, and at lower rates. The evidence is so clear from our hearings: In the areas of the country where there is full competition between cable providers, rates to customers are considerably lower. The same is going to be true when there is greater effective competition between cable providers and satellite signal providers. Over time, the effort will permit satellite TV providers to offer a full selection of local TV channels to viewers—even those living near Burlington, VT, where local signals are now blocked.

I live about 25 miles from Burlington. I get 1½ channels. There are three stations, three network stations, in Burlington. But because I am out on the side of a mountain, I get 1½ channels. Under the rules they are talking about, I would not be allowed to get satellite TV to have those same networks. It is ridiculous. It defies reality. But our legislation will cure that.

Under current law, those families have to get their local TV systems over an antenna. If their situation is like mine, it does not give you a clear picture. These bills we now have before us will remove that legal limitation that prohibits satellite carriers from offering local TV signals to viewers.

What we want is this: That over time, satellite carriers will have to follow the rules that cable providers have to follow, which means they will have to carry, in our case, all local Vermont TV stations—and the same in other States. In addition, Vermont stations will be available over satellite to many areas in Vermont like my own that today are unserved by satellite or by cable. And the second major improvement offered through our legislation is satellite carriers that offer local Vermont channels in their mix of programs will be able to reach Vermonters throughout our State.

People who have spent money on satellite dishes do not know how this thing could become as fouled up as it is. Frankly, I do not either. But I do know that we can correct it, and our legislation will. It is time for this Congress to step up to the plate and solve this policy nightmare. It is now at the door of countless homes, not only in Vermont but throughout the country. Constituents should know they should not have to take, ''Well, not now,'' as an acceptable answer. We have plenty time left in this Congress to correct this.

I commend Senators HATCH and MCCAIN for the leadership they have shown in solving this problem. I am going to continue working with them and I think we are going to get somewhere. I certainly hope we are going to get somewhere, because I don't want to have to tell my neighbors that the Congress has so much time for so many other things but cannot take some time to fix something that directly affects so many hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country.

FORTIETH RATIFICATION OF THE OTTAWA LANDMINE TREATY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in October of 1996, I was privileged to participate in a conference in Ottawa hosted by Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy. I was there with Tim Rieser of my staff who has done so much work on the issue of banning landmines. We were also accompanied by Bobby Muller, the head of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, a man who was way ahead of most of us in pushing for a ban on antipersonnel landmines.

The purpose of the conference in 1996 was to chart a strategy culminating in a global treaty banning antipersonnel landmines. The Ottawa process was conceived of by Canada and a number of other governments that were fed up with the failure of previous efforts to seriously deal with the mine problem.

Over 70 governments and dozens of nongovernmental organizations accepted Minister Axworthy's invitation to Ottawa. At that conference, to the surprise of everyone present—but certainly to my delight—Minister Axworthy took the courageous step of challenging the world's governments to return in a year's time to sign a treaty that would accomplish nothing less than a total ban on antipersonnel landmines.

It was that bold challenge which enabled the international community to finally move from rhetoric to action. In December 1997, just barely over a year later, 122 governments returned to Ottawa to sign a treaty banning the production, transfer, and use of antipersonnel mines forever.

During the previous year, the United States had refused to participate in the treaty-drafting process. In fact, some U.S. officials dismissed the Ottawa process as a ''sideshow.'' They predicted that without U.S. support, the Canadian effort would eventually run out of steam. They predicted that this treaty would never take effect.

In fact, Mr. President, the opposite happened. A few days ago, Burkina Faso, one of so many African countries whose people have been maimed and killed by landmines, became the 40th state to deposit its papers of ratification with the United Nations, triggering the 6-month period before the treaty formally comes into force.

What many once dismissed as a naive and far-fetched dream is now a reality. In fact, today the treaty has some 129