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Media Decoder

Behind the Screens, Between the Lines

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Judge Rules Against Online TV Service

By **BRIAN STELTER**

A federal judge ruled Tuesday that Ivi TV, an ambitious online video start-up, must stop rebroadcasting signals of local television stations on the Internet, dealing a major setback to the company.

Ivi said the injunction by the United States District Court in New York had forced the company to shut down most of its service, though it said some channels would remain available for Web streaming. The company said it would appeal the ruling.

The injunction was an important win for television broadcasters, who have accused Ivi of effectively stealing their over-the-air signals and repackaging them for paying customers on the Internet. The major broadcasters and some movie studios teamed up to sue Ivi late last year.

The National Association of Broadcasters said it was gratified that Ivi's service had been largely halted. In a statement, the association said, "In granting the injunction, the court found that Ivi should not 'be allowed to continue to steal plaintiffs' programming for personal gain until a resolution of this case on the merits.' We agree."

Ivi vowed to fight on. The company promotes itself as an innovator that wants to supply TV channels through the Internet at a lower cost than entrenched cable and satellite companies. The company depends on government rules involving so-called retransmission consent of programming. Those longstanding rules are now being tested in an online arena, prompting the clash between Ivi and the broadcasters.

For about \$5 per user per month, Ivi pulled in stations from cities like New York and Chicago. The service gained attention last fall when Fox programming was blacked out in Cablevision homes for two weeks, causing people to look for alternatives.

Todd Weaver, chief executive of Ivi, said in a statement: "This fight is for the people and their right to choice and control over their own entertainment — and it will continue. The oppressive big media networks must open their doors to innovators or they will inevitably fall. People want responsible choice, not the one-size-fits-all television offerings imposed by powerful media interests."