

WAPC



Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels

Serving the needs of public, education, and government cable access television stations since 1998.

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PEG Stations Praise Rep. Tammy Baldwin's Community Access Preservation Act

The Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels praises long-time advocate of public, education, and government access television, Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D – Wisconsin, 2nd District) for introducing the Community Access Preservation (CAP) Act of 2009 (H.R. 3745). The bill would have a strong positive effect on public, education, and government access channels in Wisconsin.

The CAP Act, which was introduced yesterday, would resolve problems that have arisen because federal cable law, new state video franchise laws, and recent FCC decisions have not been working successfully together to safeguard local community-based PEG channels. In Wisconsin, video providers like AT&T and Charter Communications have taken advantage of the situation to undermine non-profit PEG channels.

Wisconsin PEG stations would benefit from the CAP Act in several ways. The CAP Act would make clear that federal cable law and regulations apply equally to all land-line companies competing for cable customers. The CAP Act would also level the playing field by requiring all video providers to place PEG on discrete channels in a manner that is equivalent to the treatment of standard commercial broadcast channels. AT&T would not be able to bury PEG under a series of menus on channel 99 like they do today. Charter would not be able to continue to carry Wisconsin PEG channels in remote areas of the spectrum that are prone to FM broadcast interference.

The CAP Act would also provide reassurance to the thirty or so PEG access stations in Wisconsin that rely on PEG fees. The bill would allow stations to use PEG fees for any PEG-related purpose, not just for capital or facilities. PEG fees scheduled to end on January 1, 2011 because of Wisconsin's Act 42, might not end on that date, if the FCC study required under this bill is not completed by that time. The study would examine how state video franchise laws have affected PEG stations. Support for PEG channels would continue until the FCC concludes its analysis so that PEG stations do not go under while the FCC considers the issue. Many states with state video franchise laws have seen a sharp decline in community-based PEG channels.

"Decisions at the state and federal level have combined to create a crisis for PEG. With the CAP Act, Rep. Baldwin effectively addresses the most immediate problems and opens the door to the future by preserving support for PEG while the FCC conducts its study. This bill is critical to us. Wisconsin's rich community access heritage is on the line," said Mary Cardona, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels.

Advocates of PEG channels are urged to contact their Member of Congress and ask that they co-sponsor Rep. Baldwin's bill. The House of Representatives' switchboard number is (202) 224-3121 or go to this link: <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

www.saveaccess.tv/wisconsin.org

www.wapconline.com

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