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Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels

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

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Letter to the Editor Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Thank you for your article “Video franchise law no boon to consumer” (November 8, 2008). As Rick Barrett reported, the law that standardized cable television franchises statewide has not decreased rates, created long-term jobs, or brought competition quickly to the marketplace as promised by AT&T and its lobbying partner, the cable industry. Unlike the local franchise system that empowered municipalities to enter into good-faith negotiations with cable companies to resolve problems, the law that passed the legislature last December has established weak state oversight and stripped municipalities of any control. Short of taking a company to court – a very expensive proposition – or drumming up public outrage, municipalities, consumers, and public access television stations have no way to curb abuse. WAPC used both the threat of court action and public pressure to get Charter Communications to stop its plan to move and digitize the public, education, and government access channels – an action that would have left nearly half of the company’s subscribers without these community channels – unless they paid \$5 more per month or purchased a QAM digital television set.

Our communities should not have to resort to such extreme and expensive measures to protect the public interest.

In his partial veto message, Governor Doyle urged the legislature to consider follow-up legislation to address concerns – particularly concerns about our community channels. We look forward to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel coverage of that effort, so essential to keeping the public informed and creating pressure for more consumer-friendly legislation.

Mary Cardona
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