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Support 5814

Cable Area 2 / Cable Advisory Council
Fairfield Representative
Government Access Television Alliance Committee / Cable Area 2

Comment:

When I was approached a week or so ago about this bill #5814, I read the first section and said this is great. Finally the towns will have some autonomy that this 11 year era of over-lording and mistrust was waning. The local Community Access system could now be treated like adults. Unlike the accusations of the CAP in the Re-franchise hearings, the Towns and the Cable Advisory Council will be trusted and included and so I congratulate the sponsors on recognizing that that the primary maxim of "Public" Or "Community" Access has for too long been confused with the term "Broadcasting" either local or regional. Or at least I will say this been the case in Cable Area 2.

But then I re-read Bill #5814 again...

The bill #5814 addresses some of the many needs for a uniform **platform of rights** and mechanisms that reflect the intent and concerns and interests of the local Access communities as not simply a secondary entity to a dominate corporate partner or Cable Access Provider.

In other ways it neglects or omits directives on the distribution of the stakeholders' dollars for funding and financial support that the PEG needs at the local level. It seeks to recognize **the Stakeholder and their local community as the driving force and primary beneficiary of the system** but it still abides by the corporate and its' short changing of the Public Access system and other mechanisms either by limited bandwidth or not addressing configurations of new or existing technologies that directly effect Community Access.

The Bill #5814 seeks to address the failure to recognize that "**Access**" means the **availability of production and distribution tools to each community**, which in turn allows these entities a voice in a medium ordinarily inaccessible to it. That "**Access**" has too long prevailed in some communities as a re-broadcasting of imported content. Although it is informative, it is not locally based. It in turn hinders the communities by not addressing the full spectrum of access as a local matter and right.

It skirts the issue of some communities that have been held back or not found "Access" to the Public Access system as it may never have been properly defined or funded and is thus vulnerable to a malaise by management. It is a failure to perceive a broader but intimate association with the stakeholders and the communities they live in.

If there is no other aspect that is fostered by this bill it is that a platform for that originally intended relationship needs to be rekindled and brought forth. The sales pitch is over and the Subscriber / Stakeholder is awaiting his or her due.

I am aware that the bill sponsors have been out into the communities to actively formulate a needs assessment. They have spoken with the local PEG production groups as well as evaluated the caliber of existing CAPs. Their efforts have included addressing the issue of *the full composite of entities* and they have thus experienced a viable ability by local production entities. The production entities have varied operating procedures that are directly reflective of local / stakeholder awareness and participation.

This same task was taken on two years ago by the DPUC for the re-franchising of Sound View Community Media CAP of Area 2. That well intentioned and balanced report was, for the most part, rejected in its entirety by the DPUC in regard to Community Access. Not because it was flawed but because the report sided with the local communities in many ways that the CAP feared: concerning funds and distribution thereof. This would have allowed for a more liberal access to Town-Specific use by local communities.

Some weight has been given community access in this bill as it was in the re-franchise agreement for Area 2, but in the long run it is a vehicle of the corporate parsing of PEG as a secondary entity. The limited bandwidth or picture size as provided in the AT&T' U Verse package or neglecting the consideration of eliminating Motion # 5.1 in The Sound View Re-franchise agreement has for the past eleven years only seemed to be an effective tool at holding back funds and Town Specific Access to the individual communities of Area 2. Rather than recognizing the more Community Access Friendly motion #7.1 of the Cablevision Franchise agreement and the built in technology that so simply and beautifully allows access by a hundred fold to and from any community within the system and in a full screen presentation.

If this bill, # 5814, is an effort to return to the true spirit and intent of PEG Access as a local voice, window or doorway into local Government and Community affairs as well as the community as a whole. **It should recognize the true source and purpose for and the funding of is the Subscriber / Stakeholder** of each town and seek to return a more applicable and relevant use of to **each** community. In this way, it holds the highest promise for the original intent of the PEG System and its' resources. This is a **service to the primary beneficiary, the Stakeholder/ Subscriber and their local community. Not a regional overlord or a corporate looking to economize.**

It as well recognizes the entry of new entities into the market place as providers of electronic mediums and should seek to maintain a consistent platform for the PEG system throughout the different delivery systems and platforms. But in the same hand seems to limit or even prohibit competitive growth of existing technologies to evolve and compete.

It is my hope this bill address the Community Access quotient for what it is and what the promise seemed to be 35 years ago at the beginning of the proliferation of The Cable Television system.

Community Access was payment for the right of way in my town, your town, and all the towns across America. The communities were not supposed to be treated like rubes stumbling onto a used car deal or a sub-prime scam to be exploited across America. But yet in some ways it has become that.

Community Access has roots in many communities where municipal leadership has taken bold steps, such as in Orange CT. Where as, in other municipalities local leaders hide behind so called "Baby Step" approaches and have produced nothing but facades. At 35 years old the Community Access System is a pretty old baby.

If this bill is to address Community Access needs then it needs to forego the implied burden of it to the corporate entity and recognize that if for no other reason, this is an exchange for doing business locally and a businessman worth his salt would stand up to being short changed. In the end this bill, the compromise of legislation, should not mean the short shifting of the compact between Community Access and the various media providers and others.

Respectfully,
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Mediaphile

