

Testimony in Favor of HB 5814
An Act Concerning Community Access Television
Energy and Technology Committee
March 7, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sol Silverstein. I am a resident of Orange and the chairman of the Orange Government Access Television Committee or OGAT. We are the governing body for the Orange Government Access Television channel, and we support House Bill 5814, especially Section 1 concerning town specific programming.

As you may be aware, in Area 2, we have been battling a totally unsympathetic DPUC and a third party community access provider, Soundview Community Media, to retain our town specific cablecast status. We have been a 24/7 town specific station longer than Sound View has been in business. It is a status we have successfully grown and used to make local government more accessible and more understandable to the residents of Orange and to maintain transparency in town government. OGAT is entirely funded by the taxpayers of Orange. Since its beginnings in 1998 the Town of Orange has appropriated over \$400,000 to OGAT. We have never needed nor requested funds or help from Sound View. In fact, we have helped our neighboring communities in Area 2 come up to speed on government access programming when Sound View failed to do so.

Section 1 of the bill, as well as several other sections, are vital to our ability to continue to provide this service to our community. The continuation of OGAT as a town specific entity is demanded by our viewers. I say this with great certainty as a result of the petition letter we circulated supporting the town specific position. Our goal was to get 1000 letters signed. We easily exceeded this goal by collecting 1200 in just two days and stopped collecting more. We also conducted a survey of our viewers and learned that 96% of the respondents do not want to see regional programming on OGAT, and 98% get their information about government related events in town from OGAT. In spite of the 1200 petitions, testimony in favor maintaining our town specific status by town officials, our legislators, residents, the Attorney General, the Office of Consumer Counsel and the DPUC's own needs assessor, the DPUC is requiring that we negotiate away our town specific rights.

It is now up to you, our legislators, to correct this situation. Please act favorably on HB 5814. Thank you.