



# *Town of Wallingford, Connecticut*

March 7, 2008

## Government Access Television

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WALLINGFORD, CT 06492  
TELEPHONE (203) 294-2199

Senator John Fonfara  
Representative Steve Fontana  
Co-Chairs, Energy and Technology Committee  
Room 3900, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: H.B. 5814, LCO No. 2680, An Act Concerning Community Access Television

Dear Committee Members,

As Manager of Government Access Television for the Town of Wallingford, I wish to express my appreciation to the Committee and its staff for allowing me to represent our facility in this legislative proceeding.

For more than thirty years, the Town of Wallingford has funded the production of public information government programming for distribution on a local cable television channel. Coverage of public meetings, profiles of municipal services, press conferences, election returns, and political debates are just a few of the offerings that are provided to our residents..

Our place in the community as a "mini C-SPAN operation" is the reason for our interest in H.B. 5814, An Act Concerning Community Access Television. The bill, in most of its provisions, is beneficial to public, educational and governmental access ("PEG") programming efforts. In particular, Section 8(a)(3) appears to ensure that all companies providing wireline video services must be fully responsible for the purchase, installation and maintenance of equipment necessary to deliver programming from each PEG facility. This section would benefit from revised language to clarify intent. Further, the bill grandfathers the existing number of PEG channels [Sections 5(c) and 8(a)(1)] and extends legacy funding provisions to companies holding a certificate of video franchise authority or a certificate of cable franchise authority [Section 8(a)(2)].

The intent of Section 8(a)(4) is troubling, however. Although the language is less than direct, the provision appears to allow a competitive video service provider to deliver PEG channels in a form deemed "most economical" by the company. It is feared that this language will encourage competitive video service providers, including AT&T U-verse, to minimize their public interest obligations as users of public rights-of-way. It does not set an appropriate and clearly defined standard for the delivery of vital community information. Potentially, this section of the bill may relegate community access programmers to a substandard method of signal delivery. As set forth in Section 8(c), the Connecticut Television Network ("CTN") would be similarly affected.

An immediate example of the potentially ruinous impact that this provision may have on community programming and CTN is the method AT&T U-verse has chosen to deliver PEG channels in the City of Palo Alto, California, and Clinton Township, Michigan. These communities have documented the numerous shortcomings of AT&T's community programming solution. If the same technology is applied here, PEG and CTN will not be delivered as television channels at all. They - alone among the signals delivered to customers - will be offered as part of a system separate and unequal as compared to the full-screen format and picture resolution of other channels carried on the video provider's basic service. Commercial programmers will enjoy robust, full-quality images; while PEG and CTN will suffer diminished quality, functionality and accessibility.

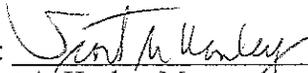
The Town of Wallingford does not want the public to lose the ability to select and view PEG programming in a timely, effective and convenient manner. Today, we have the option of utilizing our cable channel to transmit live video programming and emergency notification messages. Subscribers can find the channel without difficulty and can easily monitor long-duration programming, such as meetings, by tuning away and back with the touch of a single button. Unfortunately, these simple viewing options may become a casualty of a video provider's preference for an "economical" form of signal transmission.

We ask that you carefully consider revising Section 8(a)(4) to require all wireline multichannel video programming distributors ("MVPD") to provide channel capacity for PEG at equivalent visual and audio quality and equivalent functionality, from the viewing perspective of the subscriber, to that of commercial channels carried on MVPD basic cable or video service offerings.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Respectfully submitted,

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD

By:   
Scott A. Hanley, Manager  
Division of Government Access Television