

Re: H.B. 5814

TESTIMONY OF ANDREW SCHATZ, WEST HARTFORD COMMUNITY TV

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS ANDREW SCHATZ. I AM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF WEST HARTFORD COMMUNITY TELEVISION.

I AM ALSO AN ATTORNEY AND THIS WEEK I HAD TO BE IN PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA TO DO SOME DISCOVERY IN ONE OF MY CASES. IT HAPPENS THAT PALO ALTO'S COMMUNITY TV STATION, KNOWN AS THE MEDIA CENTER, IS ONE THAT IS RECEIVED ON AT&T'S UVERSE SYSTEM. I ASKED THE MEDIA CENTER TO HELP ME MAKE A DVD SIMPLY SHOWING HOW AT&T'S UVERSE HANDLED COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAMMING. WE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH THE DVD. I WOULD LIKE TO DESCRIBE WHAT IT SHOWS.

IN ORDER TO ACCESS COMMUNITY CHANNELS, YOU MUST SWITCH TO CHANNEL 99 AS YOU WOULD ANY CHANNEL. YOU THEN MUST PRESS THE OK BUTTON ON YOUR REMOTE AND WAIT OVER 30 SECONDS - I REPEAT, 30 SECONDS - TO GET TO A SCREEN SHOWING THE VARIOUS COMMUNITY CHANNELS. CONTRARY TO WHAT SOME HAVE SAID, THIS DELAY HAPPENS EVERY TIME YOU GO BACK TO COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING.

BUT THAT DOESN'T END THE DELAY. ONCE YOU SCROLL TO THE COMMUNITY CHANNEL YOU WISH TO WATCH, WHICH TAKES A FEW SECONDS, YOU PRESS THE OK BUTTON AGAIN AND WAIT ABOUT 8 SECONDS. IF YOU WISH TO SWITCH TO ANOTHER COMMUNITY CHANNEL, IT TAKES ANOTHER 8 SECONDS. IF YOU WISH TO LEAVE COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING TO GO BACK TO A COMMERCIAL CHANNEL, IT TAKES ABOUT 8 SECONDS.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER PROBLEMS WITH UVERSE'S TREATMENT OF COMMUNITY TELEVISION - THE PICTURE IS INFERIOR, YOU CANNOT SURF OR AUTOMATICALLY RECORD THE CHANNEL - BUT FEW WILL LIKELY EVER TAKE THE APPROXIMATELY 45 SECONDS EACH TIME TO GET TO THE CHANNEL TO FIND OUT.

CLEARLY SHUNTING COMMUNITY TELEVISION TO CHANNEL 99 AND FREEING UP CHANNEL SPACE FOR COMMERCIAL CHANNELS IS MORE PROFITABLE FOR AT&T, BUT THIS RESULT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED - NOT TO MENTION ENCOURAGED - BY USE OF THE TERM "MOST ECONOMICAL" IN THE STATUTE. THOSE ASPECTS OF THIS STATUTE THAT REQUIRE AT&T TO FUND LOCAL ACCESS STATIONS AS CABLE PROVIDERS DO SHOULD BE ADOPTED, THE REST REJECTED.

THANK YOU.