



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

**CGA Energy and Technology Committee
March 16, 2010 Public Hearing**

Comments by Pua Ford, Media Specialist

**Regarding RHB-5509 AAC Public Access Television and the Definition of Public
Service Companies**

My name is Pua Ford. I am the Media Issues specialist for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut believes that community access television channels must be adequately protected, promoted, and funded, regardless of the provider of TV/video services to Connecticut residents. Government should provide opportunities for citizen participation in decisions regarding community access, or PEG, TV.

The League supports Sections 1 and 2 of HB-5509 *AAC Public Access Television and the Definition of Public Service Companies* but opposes Section 3.

The intent of the first two sections is to ensure continuance of existing community access channels and to set a standard for the signal quality of their programming. Both sections are needed to maintain the "level playing field" between the different categories of companies in this field. The language is a milder version of the standard articulated in the 2007 Illinois law governing competitive video service, PA 95-0009.

You already know why community access is important to the League; we share basic principles of open government, citizen education and free speech. We hope it is obvious why a good signal quality standard for the community access channels is important, but it was best described to the Illinois legislature three years ago:

[O]ne of the reasons that [people watch Chicago Access Network TV] is that PEG channels are carried by cable systems in the same format and with the same signal quality as commercial broadcasters. If AT&T is matching what cable does, then PEG Access will be handled in the same way as ABC, NBC and CBS. AT&T told you last week that it is offering the state cutting edge technology. There is no excuse for there to be any erosion in quality for PEG access from the quality standards we enjoy on cable systems today.

*Testimony of Barbara Popovic to Illinois House Telecommunications Committee
Hearing, March 15, 2007*

The quote and the pertinent sections of the Illinois bill concern AT&T's delivery of PEG programming on their U-verse service. But we note that Section 2 of this year's bill also applies to Cablevision and Thames Valley Cable, companies that also hold certificates of video franchise authority. In the Cablevision Litchfield area, there have been complaints about compressed digital signal causing poor reception (frozen or pixelated picture). We have been offered evidence of the complaint, and we think it should be examined by the technical experts at DPUC. In the meantime, setting a standard makes it clear to everyone what we expect from all providers. The spirit of "level playing field" dictates that Section 1 should also be included, to ensure that all players comply with a good standard.

The League opposes Section 3 of this bill. Under Section 16-1 of the 2010 supplement to the general statutes, community antenna television companies and holders of certificates of cable franchise authority are considered public service companies; we believe that, all companies in the industry should have that designation under the current environment. They all provide the same service. We propose that, instead of deleting the language in lines 61-62, language should be added to include "holders of certificates of video franchise authority."

As a whole, this bill (with amendment to Section 3) would improve protection for community access television organizations. But it would be more effective with concurrent passage of HB 5463 *AAC Periodic Review of Video Providers*.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to comment on these issues today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut. This week is Sunshine Week in America. Thank you for keeping the government open.

Full testimony as quoted on page 1:

<http://www.cantv.org/Barbara%27s%20testimony.pdf>

Illinois statutes (220 ILCS 5/21-601) Article XXI. Cable and Video Competition.

Please see Sec. 21-601 subsections (c) and (f)

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/95/095-0009.htm>

Summary of Illinois PA 95-0009

<http://www.cantv.org/PEG-SB678.pdf>