



Wallingford Public Access Association, Inc.
28 So. Orchard St.
Wallingford CT 06492

March 3, 2014

Energy & Technology Committee
Rm 3900 Legislative Office Building
Hartford CT 06106

Re: Support HB 5172 Restoration of PUBLIC, EDUCATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT (PEGPETIA) Funds:

Dear Members of the Energy & Technology Committee

First, thanks to the community of legislators for all the independently submitted bills to both ET and Appropriations on Behalf of PEGPETIA funds restoration. This signals a few things that directly align with *the hyper-local nature of Community Access and Education in CT*: There is a lack of a coalition of fund eligible entities; there are several Users of community media among the legislators and the impact of the funds disruption was felt in many CT communities.

On what does everyone appear to be on the same Page: **Restoration of a PEGPETIA Program with future revenues at the earliest point in time!** Philosophical differences prevail on restoration of all funds, prohibiting future similar government intervention, program fairness, *taxation fairness*, program effectiveness (especially strategic) and the competitive nature of the process that discourages local collaboration. In my opinion, Constitutional Amendments (H.J. #18) should be acts of last resort.

Why was the money there to sweep?

Sweeps have occurred under 2 administrations. The monies were available to sweep because

- 1) The docket method of distributing capital improvements monies is labor intensive
- 2) Outreach about the program was poor
- 3) Many eligible entities are volunteer (or part-time staff) run so grant writing , compliance reporting and cycle coordination is EXTREMELY challenging
- 4) Capital funding for Emergency costs are denied (funds need to be approved before spent) ,
- 5) Substantive plans were downsized merely because of size (and the pending sweep)
- 6) Installation & *training* reimbursement was routinely inadequate.

To better clarify the original purpose of the funding, and support the programs effective **reimplementation** the following recommendations are submitted to inform any amending of any bill that optimistically moves forward from this public review process.



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Recommendations:

Goal 1 Spend more wisely & fairly: If the docket process is retained consider allocating a % of the funds to program administration at PURA so program data is collected and publically available to show clearly who is benefiting; best practices, outreach deserts and vendor pricing.

Goal 2 Simplify Process: This simple grant process routinely reads more like a legal brief than a community project award program. Since schools and Community Access Providers (CAP) are eligible why not just extend proof of eligibility only to those that do not automatically meet criteria. There is enough experience now to see what is repetitive, useful or redundant.

Goal 3 Improve Process: There is so much potential here. Most notably the current process encourages top dollar payment for technology that is not the most current available; it does not encourage use of CT based vendors; it fails to support expenditure s for training of the front-line users thereby limiting the success of the overall investments.

Goal 4 Emergencies: Going off the Air should not be acceptable. Allow for emergency capital expenditures to be reimbursed. Evidence of financial and technology management are critical to emergency assessment.

Goal 5 Infrastructure: Encourage relocation of return-lines and other distribution improvements that improve local collaboration or other cost-saving opportunities. Provider charges for relocation discourage infrastructure improvements and should have some oversight.

Thank you for consideration of PEGPETIA fund & program restoration (and program improvement),

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Susan A. Huizenga'.

Susan Huizenga
Executive Director
WPAA-TV and Media Center
Community Access Provider (CAP) Town of Wallingford

Cc: Wallingford Representatives, Co-sponsors of HB 5172, Board of WPAA-TV, CT ACM