



**CGA Energy and Technology Committee
March 7, 2008 Public Hearing**

**Submitted by Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Secretary
Area Nine Cable Council**

Comments on: HB 5814 An Act Concerning Community Access Television

Good morning, Senator Fonfara, Representative Fontana, and members of the committee. I'm Carole Young-Kleinfeld, from the Area Nine Cable Council—the advisory council for the Cablevision of Connecticut franchise with 121,000 subscribers in 10 towns in southern Fairfield County where AT&T has, in some towns, rolled out its U-Verse service.

Thank you for the chance to comment on HB 5814.

ANCC has historically taken the position that competition in video services benefits consumers but that a level playing field for video service providers is essential in preserving true competition. Our cable council has supported and advocated for carriage of CT-N on a dedicated analog channel on our cable system. Our residents value the opportunity to view their state government live and unedited. We have also advocated for the provision of town-specific community access from the first time that video competition from telephone companies became a reality in CT in DPUC docket 05-06-12.

We applaud the efforts of the legislature in formulating legislation to achieve and support the aforementioned goals and issues that have been priorities for the ANCC over many years. Our interest in the current bill follows:

- In Area 9, Educational & Governmental access has been operating through a successful, locally controlled, town-specific model since 1997. Each town in Area 9 has its own E and its own G channel. Our residents, our public officials, and our community organizations value this model of PEG delivery and have clearly voiced their support for this model in DPUC's public hearings. They have stated that it builds a sense of community and encourages local participation in the political process. **We urge your support for the sections of this bill that promote town-specific models of community access TV, regardless of provider.**
- **Competitive video service providers should carry, support, and provide the means to transport the P, E, and G programs produced by the local communities in which they sell their service, since they use the communities' rights of way to deliver the service. As with their cable competitors, these companies should not charge the local municipalities or the producers of community access programming for the infrastructure needed to deliver the programming. They also should not charge these costs against the PEG support provision. We hope that this was the intent of the committee in the revision of Section 8 of 5814 and, if so, request that you clarify this intent in the final draft.**
- The final sentences in Section 8 require further attention from the committee. By allowing the "most economical" manner of PEG transmission, this language appears to sanction the type of PEG channel treatment on U-Verse that has been described by AT&T staff in several meetings in Connecticut, demonstrated in a recent Congressional hearing in Washington DC, and posted on

YouTube. In those demonstrations, PEG channels are provided through a separate system that requires viewers to take several additional steps to reach their town's P, E or G channels, only to be presented with a smaller, lower quality transmission that is not equivalent to a regular channel on the U-Verse service itself or on a competitors' service.

Because we wish to promote—not discourage—interest in PEG programming among viewers, we oppose PEG channels being handled in this fashion. We urge the Committee to require all video providers to provide full channels for PEG and for CT-N—regardless of the type of certification they receive in the future from the DPUC.

- Finally, our cable council members have expressed a privacy concern over AT&T's video service where town-specific educational access programming will be available without restrictions to all U-verse subscribers in the state. In Educational Access programs, where young students appear, the identities of these children are freely accessible outside their communities. **We urge you to craft legislation that would to restrict statewide access to these programs by providing them only to viewers in the community of origination. This issue could be resolved if community access TV were to be handled like the other regular TV channels.**

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to express our comments on HB 5814.