

# St. Louis County Commission

## For Educational Media

Strengthening our schools, educating our workforce, enhancing our quality of life

November 9, 2018

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

RE: MB Docket No. 05-311

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to express The St. Louis County, Missouri Commission For Educational Media's opposition to the FCC's proposed new rules that would appear to allow cable operators to deduct from their cable franchise payments the market value of PEG channel capacity, thus reducing the existing cable television franchise fee for use of public rights-of-way in our county. Video providers are profiting from the use of these public rights-of-way, and it is reasonable to require that the public receive benefit for allowing use of county property, without the proposed reduction.

St. Louis County currently levies a 5% franchise fee for use of its rights-of-way, and revenues generated by this fee are used to fund the Higher Education Channel (HEC-TV) and road and stormwater projects. Forty percent (40%) of revenues are dedicated to HEC-TV, and sixty percent (60%) of revenues are used for public works projects. Our total revenue from the cable television franchise fee is \$6 million. In addition, St. Louis County requires video service providers to provide channel capacity for HEC-TV, as specifically allowed by Missouri's 2007 Video Services Providers Act Sections 67.2675 to 67.2714 RSMo.

HEC-TV began its existence in 1981 as a PEG cable television channel, operated and managed by The St. Louis County Commission For Educational Media. It has grown into America's Education, Arts, and Cultural channel and the world leader in interactive distance learning. HEC-TV is an enormously valuable community asset that strengthens our schools, educates our workforce, and enhances our quality of life.

3221 McKelvey Road Suite 104 St. Louis, MO 63044

Phone: 314-942-3730 Fax: 314-942-3731

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With its mission of “strengthening and promoting our education, arts, and cultural communities”, HEC-TV produces more local television programming than all commercial or non-commercial television stations in the St. Louis region. Three times, HEC-TV has received the *Station of Excellence* Emmy Award for the entire central U.S. region. To date, HEC-TV programming has been recognized with: 72 Emmy Awards, 68 National Telly Awards, 22 National NATOA Awards, 14 International Aurora Awards, 2 International Pinnacle Awards, and the National Education Association’s *Friend of Education* Award.

For 25 years, HEC-TV programmed telecourses have enabled viewers to earn more than 50,000 college credit hours per year. Today, HEC-TV is the world leader in creating interactive distance learning opportunities and produces standards-based curriculum for educators and students to use all HEC-TV programming in classrooms nationwide. When the State of Missouri faced a workforce crisis with 750,000 adults having no high school education, HEC-TV programmed a series of courses leading viewers to GED completion.

HEC-TV brings the best of the world to St. Louis and the best of St. Louis to the world.

The requirement to provide channel capacity for HEC-TV has never been considered part of franchise fees. This proposed action by the FCC could significantly reduce funding available for needed road and storm water projects and for St. Louis County’s award winning PEG channel.

Thank you for your consideration of The St. Louis County Commission For Educational Media’s comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alan Winkelmann", with a stylized, flowing script.

Alan Winkelmann  
President,  
St. Louis County Commission for Educational Media

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