

12/05/2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
The Honorable Michael O’Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC, 20544

RE: MB Docket No 05-311. In the Matter of Implementation of Section 621(a)(1) of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 as Amended by the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992.

We are writing in support of the Comments of the Cable Act Preservation Alliance (“CAPA,” File ID 1114050901562) in the Second Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making. We oppose the tentative conclusions the FCC reaches in the proceeding because of their impacts on our community.

Saint Paul’s United Methodist Church in Saint Albans, Vermont has worked in conjunction with our local Public Access Channel (Channel 15) for over 10 years to broadcast our Sunday worship services and other special services. This relationship with Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access Television and Community Media has allowed us to publicize events such as Cram the Van where the community gathered together to donate over 300 turkeys to the local food shelf for Thanksgiving. The airing of our worship services allows for our shut-ins and nursing home bound congregants to feel a part of the congregation and have the ability to worship God in the comfort of their room. We don’t always know the difference that our worship services being broadcast makes on the community but I’d like to share three stories with you.

Our worship service is broadcast three times over the week. One of them is in the middle of the night Monday. A long-time parishioner had stopped attending when she had to care for elderly parents. She dealt with insomnia and one night was flipping channels and found Saint Paul’s broadcast on Channel 15. She watched the service and enjoyed the pastor’s humor. The following week, she was up again in the middle of the night. After several months of watching the services on her tv, she showed back up at church, wondering if the pastor was really like that in person. She is currently our church organist and a member of the trustees. Through the broadcast, we were able to reach her in ways that would not have worked through cards, phone calls and a visit from the pastor. This PEG helped to reconnect her with her faith and this congregation!

The second story I want to share is when I was out grocery shopping with my young children one afternoon. A lady stopped me in the aisle and said, “hey, you are the lady preacher I see on tv!” I

have never seen her in worship, but she was watching and knew who I was. I am hoping that connections like that will allow for her to one day step foot in our church, knowing that there are people who care about her and her connection to God.

The last story I want to share is of two wonderful and faithful members of our congregation who are in their 90's. We live in northern Vermont where the weather is dicey from November through April. When the weather is good, we would always see Gordon with his cane and Gladys with her walker. When the weather was bad, they wouldn't be there, but Gordon would call me on Monday to tell me that he watched us on Channel 15 and would offer feedback on the sermon, hymn selections or the children's message. Through the ability to access the worship service through the PEG, these two are able to stay connected during the winter months.

This benefit for people of faith was what was intended when Congress set up the Cable Act. PEG Access does not solely benefit a local government or franchising authority- it benefits and strengthens the community as a whole.

By allowing cable operators to reduce franchise fee support for local communities if they opt for local channels, the FNPRM diminishes the ability of PEG organization to serve communities such as ours. We ask that it not be adopted.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Megan Stowe, Saint Paul's United Methodist Church, Saint Albans. VT