

Companies seeking the privilege to provide a broadcast service to communities receive significant concessions from the public. Examples of such concessions can include use of broadcast frequencies and the inconveniences (as well as visual pollution) resulting from necessary infrastructure. Such service is not like a truly independent company which must provide compensation in order to obtain the vital components of their businesses.

Given the public's desire and benefit from the existence of services such as broadcast and utilities, it is appropriate to grant such significant concessions so long as the service provider takes seriously their public obligations. Unfortunately, too many such companies push the limits for the sake of ever-increasing profits without appropriate regard for the public assistance provided them. The highly publicized behavior of many energy-related service companies has confirmed this point in the past several years.

Requiring such service companies to obtain a franchise from cities helps ensure that there are consequences for the most offensive companies.

Furthermore, specific to broadcast services, haven't the courts determined that the appropriateness of some content issues are determined by LOCAL standards?

Finally, it is especially disturbing that this issue is being raised in regards to telecommunications companies. Here in northern California, for example, my experiences with AT&T demonstrates that customer service is a low priority. Furthermore, AT&T's mistakes along with untrue assertions made by it regarding the source of service problems would seem to indicate that the company has difficulty providing the services for which they are already authorized.

Also, assuming that service conditions are implemented with a company (often a very long process that succeeds with only the most extreme problems), companies seem able to shed such requirements and start everything from the beginning by selling out to another company.

Given the demonstrated need to have remedies to deal with companies that do not well serve local communities, I believe requiring franchises from cities is an important procedure which should not be eliminated.