

Petitions for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Public, Educational and Governmental Access Channels, MB Docket No. 09-13, CSR-8126 (ACM et. Al), CSR-8127 (City of Lansing, Michigan)

The Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (OH-NATOA) representing 54¹ Ohio communities hereby supports and strongly urges the Commission to grant the two above-named petitions concerning public, educational and governmental (PEG) access channels. AT&T's PEG channel platform makes it more difficult for subscribers to access and watch PEG programming. Below is an explanation of PEG's role in many of our communities, and why we feel it is important to prevent operators from inhibiting access to these channels.

1. PEG Programming in OH-NATOA Member Communities

In the majority of our cities, PEG programming includes: live coverage of City Council meetings and Planning Commission meetings, mayor and councilmember interview programs, Police and Fire safety programs, school and college classes, parades, concerts, school sports and cultural events, Chamber of Commerce sponsored political debates, and State of the City reports. Thus, PEG programming throughout Ohio provides each of our localities with public safety, educational, cultural, informational and local opinion programming of uniquely local interest that cannot be obtained anywhere else on TV.

2. The Situation in Ohio

Our members rely upon our PEG channels to convey important public information, while residents in our communities rely on the channels to receive information that is timely and of local interest. If the channels are less accessible, then they lose their value and the subscribers that we now reach would not receive the information at all. While AT&T has been extending their U-verse product in some areas of Ohio since late 2007, the overwhelming majority of our PEG channels are not carried on the AT&T system. This is due in part to the fact that AT&T doesn't serve all areas of the state. In those few areas served by AT&T, there is a reluctance by cities to provide their channels on AT&T's PEG product, because it is an inherently inferior system. OH-NATOA members are extremely concerned that should the Commission endorse the actions of AT&T, there is little doubt that all the operators serving our communities would marginalize or effectively eliminate PEG access.

3. The Commission Should Grant the Petitions Concerning AT&T's PEG Product (CSR-8126 & CSR-8127)

Only one of our member communities (Mentor, Ohio) is providing its government channel programming for carriage on AT&T U-verse. That community's experience confirms many of the deficiencies identified in the petitions. In virtually every conceivable way that matters to a television viewer, the AT&T PEG product is markedly inferior to every other channel carried on AT&T's U-verse system. These include: ease of finding the menu system, ease of access, the time it takes to download PEG programming, the ability to switch back and forth between PEG programs and commercial channels, the ability to record using the AT&T provided DVR, closed captioning capability, and secondary audio (SAP) capability. Residents are commenting

that while they used to be regular viewers of the government channel over the cable system, they now, “forget that the government channel is there.” It’s simply a matter of “out of sight, out of mind.”

To preserve PEG as envisioned in the Cable Act, the Commission should grant the petitions in CSR-8126 and CSR-8127.

Conclusion

Our PEG channels are a critical and irreplaceable resource for each of our 54 member communities. These channels are the key medium of communication for our local governments to communicate with their residents, for the local schools to communicate with the families of the children they are teaching, and for residents to participate in dialogues concerning the communities in which they live.

In light of the decreasing amount of truly local programming that is available on broadcast channels today, PEG is the only full-time, genuinely local source of television programming that directly impacts our residents. On behalf of the members of the Ohio Chapter of NATOA, we strongly urge the Commission to grant the above referenced petitions.

Respectfully submitted,

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OH-NATOA Chapter Members

City of Akron
City of Brunswick
City of Cincinnati
Community Programming Board of Forest Park, Greenhills and Springfield Township
City of Dayton
Dayton Access TV
City of Dublin
Intercommunity Cable Regulatory Commission (representing 30 communities in the Greater Cincinnati area)
Media Bridges, Cincinnati
Medina Cable Access
City of Mentor
Miami Valley Communications Council (Represents: Centerville, Germantown, Kettering, Miamisburg, Moraine, Oakwood, Springboro, West Carrollton)
Perry Public Schools
City of Shaker Heights
City of Toledo
Union Township