



Wisconsin Community Media

Working to create an informed public and a strong sense of community.

2011 – 2012
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March 8, 2012

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
10 East Doty, Suite 405
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Dear Tammy,

It is my pleasure to inform you that Wisconsin Community Media (formerly the Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels) has chosen you our 2012 **Friend of Access**. In so doing, the Board of Directors recognizes your continuing and unflagging leadership in bringing federal legislation forward to protect and promote community television.

Your Community Access Preservation Act (H. R. 1746) would provide Wisconsin community television stations with the relief they need most -- allowing local governments to reinstate PEG fees, requiring video providers to provide upstream facilities, and making the restored PEG fees usable not only for capital expenses, but also for operating costs.

Since passage of Wisconsin Act 42 (2007), stations that depended on negotiated PEG fees for operating income have been hit the hardest. The access station in Wausau has closed, WYOU in Madison and the West Allis Community Media Center are teetering on the brink, and Milwaukee's MATA Community Media is counting the months before its funding runs out in 2016. In addition, Eau Claire's Chippewa Valley Community Television has lost over half of its funding and has had to all but close its *public* access operation and move into smaller quarters.

These are the worst cases. However all Wisconsin community television stations are struggling today from some combination of hits -- the loss of the PEG fee for video equipment replacement, tight local government and school district budgets that have shrunk station budgets and expanded job descriptions for remaining staff, the decision by Charter to move the PEG channels to the 90's and 900's on its systems making them hard for viewers to find, continuing reception and blackout problems, and the burial of community access channels on AT&T's menu system.

As the Executive Director of WCM, I see every day how community television managers are, despite all these setbacks, making a valiant effort to cover government meetings, create issues programs, offer students media training, provide promotional opportunities for local businesses, highlight the work of non-profits, and give the public an opportunity to appear on their own local television programs. Every day, these managers wish they could do more, but they simply do not have the resources. Every day I am in awe of their dedication to community television and I know that this dedication comes from seeing first-hand how community television empowers people and creates an informed public with a strong sense of community.

Wisconsin Community Media and all of our sixty member stations and their cities want you to know how much we appreciate the effort you are making on our behalf in Washington. Thank you, Tammy, for what you have stood for not only in the 112th Congressional Session, but throughout your tenure in Congress. You were our *first* Friend of Access in 2006 and we could not have chosen a better person to set the bar for this award.

The Friend of Access Award will be presented to you at our Spring Conference scheduled for May 3 and 4 in Marshfield. I will be in touch with your scheduler in the hope you are able to attend during your busy campaign schedule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Cardona". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Mary Cardona
Executive Director

cc: Wisconsin Community Media members
Wisconsin Congressional delegation
Wisconsin League of Municipalities
Alliance for Community Media
American Community Television