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through media since 1998.*

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Baldwin and Markey introduce the CAP Act in the Senate!

Senators Tammy Baldwin (D - Wisconsin) and Edward Markey (D - Massachusetts) reintroduced the Community Access Preservation Act, "the CAP Act," in the Senate yesterday.

"The 80-plus public, educational, and governmental access channels in the state of Wisconsin deliver invaluable public programming on a daily basis, commercial free and with the sole purpose of informing and educating our communities," said Baldwin. "As local budgets tighten and television delivery methods change, we must ensure that our local public access channels are able to continue to reflect local interests and bring diverse programming to the public."

"PEG access stations are televised town squares where local citizens can see and hear what is happening in their own community, and respond with their own voices to the issues affecting their cities and towns," said Markey. "I have long admired the goals of education and participation heralded by these TV channels, and I will continue to support the work of these vital local resources."

Wisconsin needs the CAP Act. In 2007, state franchise legislation eliminated PEG funding. Since then, citizen-produced local programming has withered while local governments strive to retain coverage of local affairs. Some key public access centers in the state have closed their doors. The CAP Act will restore the funding lost by empowering local governments to reinstate support for the community programming residents want.

The CAP Act would allow local governments to require support from video providers as they did prior to passage of state franchise legislation. Support includes funding, in-kind support, and services.

Cities would have three options in Wisconsin. They could require the same amount of support they received before passage of the state franchise law; they could request the average amount of support provided by the cable company annually under the franchise in effect when the state franchise legislation was passed; or they could request 2% of cable company gross revenues from video (not Internet or phone) based on the effective year of the legislation.

The legislation also requires video providers to reinstate access channels, ensure community programming is carried without degradation, and provide transmission facilities and service free of charge. PEG fees would be able to be spent not only on capital purchases, but also operating expenses. While Wisconsin state law requires transmission of community programming at no charge, cities have been charged tens of thousands of dollars over the last six years for transmission facilities.

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Since 2007, Wisconsin community television has struggled. West Allis Community Media Center closed its doors last year. WYOU - Madison recently ended its production operations and continues playing programming on the channel through a location at the Madison Public Library. The Wausau Area Access Channels studios were closed to the public in 2010 and just recently reopened with a small stipend of \$15,000 from the City. Chippewa Valley Community Television downsized and eliminated most of its public access programming support. MATA Community Media is ticking down the months until its funding account is empty. There are many stories like these.

The continuing erosion of community television services in the state has been of great concern to Wisconsin Community Media and we could not be more thrilled at the prospect of a re-introduction of the CAP Act by Senators Baldwin and Markey.

Please contact your local media access center if you'd like to help garner the support of our whole Wisconsin delegation!