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Wisconsin Association of PEG Channels

Serving the needs of public, education, and government cable access television stations since 1998.

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For Immediate Release
March 24, 2010

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Citizen Action joins a growing list of supporters for the Save Our Community Television bill

Today, Citizen Action, the State's premier consumer protection organization, announced its support for the Save Our Community Television bill, AB721 and SB582. In his statement, Executive Director, Robert Kraig, said "Although Citizen Action supported the Video Competition Act in 2007, we have been very disappointed by many of the outcomes, especially the threat to the survival of community television. At a time when there is less and less public access to independent local news and information, democracy across Wisconsin is enriched by community television. We fear that many community television stations will be forced to close unless the Legislature remedies the flaws in the Video Competition Act in the next few weeks and enacts Assembly Bill 721."

Citizen Action is the most recent prominent organization to voice deep disappointment with the Video Competition Act and back repairs through the Save Our Community Television bill. Last month, the Coalition for Wisconsin Aging Groups added their name to a list of supporters that also includes the Communication Workers of America Local 4603 (Milwaukee) and Local 4622 (Oshkosh). "These organizations were promised one thing in 2007 even as the fine print of the bill was delivering quite another thing entirely. We are thrilled to have them on board as supporters working to save community television," said Mary Cardona, Executive Director, WAPC.

The Save Our Community Television bill ensures community television can survive by putting locals back in charge of funding their local community television stations. Rather than relying on taxpayer support for all of the funding for community television channels, cities will have the option, once again, to place a small fee, no more than about 60 cents per subscriber per month, on cable bills to support the local channels. Thirty or so communities will lose this small "PEG fee" on January 1, 2011, when the Video Competition bill outlaws these optional local fees that have long been used to support community television. The bill also requires that community channels be viewable by *all* subscribers, not just a portion of them, and it requires cable operators to pay for transmission equipment, as was the general practice prior to passage of Act 42.

Yesterday, the Committee on Urban and Local Affairs passed the bill on a bipartisan 4 – 3 vote, despite the absence of two co-sponsors of the bill. On the Senate side, a public hearing is expected in the Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations in early April.

www.saveaccesstvwisconsin.org
www.wapconline.com

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