

NEWS RELEASE  
*For immediate release*  
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## **U.S House Subcommittee Will Ask FCC to Examine Harm to Public, Educational and Governmental Television**

In response to testimony from Alliance for Community Media members yesterday, the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government voiced strong bi-partisan support for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access for communities and asked the FCC to examine whether AT&T and other cable operators are in compliance with the Cable Act of 1984.

In opening remarks, Subcommittee Chairman Congressman Jose Serrano (NY-D) and Congressman Mark Kirk (IL-R) expressed concern that local PEG access channels are in danger of declining or disappearing as a result of the current regulatory and business environment.

Barbara Popovic, Executive Director of Chicago Access Network Television, representing the Alliance, and Michael Max Knobbe, president of the Alliance's New York chapter, and Executive Director of BronxNet, presented testimony that detailed multiple problems with PEG access channel delivery arising out of recent actions by the FCC, state legislatures, the cable industry and AT&T. Problems that were outlined included a loss of funding and channels, movement of PEG to higher numbered channels (referred to as "channel slamming"), reduced quality and functionality of existing channels, and loss or reductions in public cable drops to schools, libraries and other public centers. Regarding the issues of AT&T's treatment of PEG channels, Ms. Popovic said "Bottom line, AT&T, the company that promotes 'choice' in cable franchising, is giving viewers no choice when it comes to PEG." Mr. Knobbe discussed the problems associated with channel slamming, which include additional costs to consumers to view PEG channels

FCC Media Bureau Chief Monica Desai agreed that at least one of these practices may be illegal, stating "We believe that placing PEG channels on any tier other than the basic service tier may be a violation of the statute." When asked why the FCC was not enforcing that provision of the statute, Ms. Desai indicated that the FCC needed a formal complaint in order to act, and had not received any. In response, Subcommittee member Adam Schiff (CA-D) stated that he believed the FCC had authority to enforce the law whether or not they'd received complaints.

In closing, Subcommittee Chairman Serrano (NY-D) and Representative Kirk (IL-R) announced that they would send a letter to the FCC asking it to deal with the issues raised at the hearing.

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*The Alliance for Community Media is the national nonprofit membership organization representing the interests of over 3000 Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) access organizations.  
For more information contact the Alliance at 202-393-2650.*