

**Summary of Testimony**  
**The Alliance for Community Media**  
**by Annie Folger, Executive Director, Midpeninsula Community Media Center**  
**Public, Educational and Government Access (PEG) In the Digital Age**  
**U.S. House Committee on Commerce and Energy**  
**Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet**

January 29, 2008

PEG Access owes its existence to the visionaries in Congress who recognized that the franchising process created an unprecedented opportunity to enable local communities to provide for their unique needs. Millions of dollars have been spent by telephone and cable companies in the past two years on ad campaigns and lobbying to influence state cable franchise laws in 17+ states. The FCC has overruled Congress, assigning itself powers that Congress conferred on local communities. This chaos is being used to dismantle PEG support and to damage channel quality and accessibility. We welcome competition. But it cannot be used to shirk PEG Access obligations that have provided direct service to the local community.

Many PEG centers have moved into digital technology for production and transmission. PEG centers are fully engaged in migration to an integrated digital environment when allowed. The primary challenge for PEG access is not digital technology, but how cable providers— whether traditional cable operator or a telephone company— provide PEG signal quality, functionality, channel placement and funding support.

**How U-Verse is Delivered in Palo Alto**

AT&T's "PEG platform" is an inferior technology which is only applied to PEG Access. The U-Verse PEG system is sub-par, low resolution and cumbersome and PEG channels are confined to a separate system inferior to commercial channels on AT&T's system in virtually every way that matters to a viewer. For example, Palo Alto cannot closed-caption the educational programming our hearing-impaired students rely on. Most DeAnza Community College programming is closed-captioned, as California law requires. AT&T, however, will not pass through the closed-captioning DeAnza includes in its programming. This means that our disabled students cannot be served as the law and common decency demand.

**Other PEG Deficiencies Engineered into U-Verse:**

- DVR's cannot record PEG
- 45-90 seconds to load channel
- Channels are hard to find
- No second audio program
- Have 25% as much resolution
- Have much smaller picture
- Picture *stutters* when used for sports, dance or motion.

*(Note: To Receive sample PEG on U-Verse DVD, see contacts on reverse side.)*

**PEG Is Under Attack Around The Country**

- **MI** Comcast unilaterally channel slams PEG in ways that make it far less accessible to the public. Comcast has closed facilities in nine different cities.
- **IN** Comcast closed PEG facilities in 12 communities.
- **OH, FL, MO, WI** PEG funding 100% eliminated in the next five years.
- **KS** Salina PEG loses over \$130,000 per year immediately—the majority of its budget.
- **TX** Time Warner eliminated PEG facilities on the first day allowed, with practically no notice, sending the Public Access channel into black.

Other examples of unintended consequences and bad action allowed in the current chaos are available.

**We Need Congressional Help**

*As you did in 1984, we look to you, our leaders in Congress, to declare your vision in 2008, to preserve the ability of local communities to engage in local media, to express their unique interests and cultures, to get to know their neighbors views, to stay informed on local issues*

**For Copies of the *PEG ON U-Verse DVD*, Please Contact Anthony Riddle**

**For further information:**

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**The Alliance fully supports the testimony of Mayor O’Rielly of Dearborn, MI on behalf of NATOA and local governments.**

*The Alliance for Community Media, a national membership organization, represents 3,000 Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Access centers across the nation. PEG channels are used by 1.2 million volunteers and 250,000 community organizations. Local PEG programmers produce 20,000 hours of new programs per week –more new programming than all of the broadcast networks combined.*