NCTV

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The Call For Solutions is a broad topic that encompasses a large and important issue in the future of Massachusetts as a whole. This response focuses on a specific aspect of the issue in which we can offer our personal expertise.

There have been a number of people who have raised the issue of the forces of competition in the development of the expanding telecom market. We concur strongly that competition is healthy for such a market.

In this spirit of competition there has been a suggestion that providers of any or all "triple play" services – voice, data, video – face fiscal market entry barriers in the negotiation of provider right of way contracts with municipality. We recognize that legal fees can cost both businesses and municipalities significant funds.

In this spirit of reducing market entry costs, some have suggested formulating standardized contracts, reducing negotiation time or allowing negotiations to be mediated by the state. It is in the this area we can lend our expertise.

I would propose that such methods could be healthy if and only if:

1. A minimum of 5% of provider revenue be mandated as operating revenue to fund PEG style community media operations.
2. A minimum of $5 per household per year for the life of the contract, be mandated up front as capital funds for the same community media center.
3. This community media operation must be locally controlled, preferably by an independent nonprofit organization. These funds are not to be used as part of a municipal budget.
4. This community media center must prioritize public access as a mission.

These are essentially bare minimum requirements to ensuring a healthy public media in the years to come. Any model formulated by the state that does not address these issues will present a loss of a real human value, of a community resource that is more important in today's technological world than ever. The internet is an incredible media delivery system. It is now even more critical that the public have access to the tools and educational resources, including living, breathing staff to utilize this new media delivery paradigm.

Thank you much for providing this opportunity.

Al Williams
Executive Director
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