

Thomas Handel
Portland Media Center
LD 1967

I'm Tom Handel, Executive Director of Portland Media Center. I'm writing in support of LD 1967, An Act To Support Municipal Franchise Agreements.

This bill ensures that private companies who make a profit from using public infrastructure fairly compensate the public for such use. Like any other business, there are expenses to be incurred to make a profit. Businesses that distribute media should not be exempt from such expenses.

This bill maintains municipalities' local control by retaining their decision to charge franchise fees payable quarterly, not annually. It also affirms that the Attorney General would handle consumer complaints as they have in the past, with occasional municipal franchise non-compliance issues to be resolved with the assistance of the PUC through an arbitration process.

Portland Media Center operates community access channels. This bill requires ALL video service providers to carry community access channels on a basic tier at a quality (i.e. HD) as all other offerings. This is vital to maintain the voice of the people in our community, which already struggles to compete with national corporately owned media.

This bill also clarifies that it is the video service provider's responsibility to pay the cost of transmitting this equally accessible signal of a quality that is at par with other media. Previous legislation has required video service providers to transmit community as an HD signal if the content we create is HD. They have not complied with the law because they contend that they will only if municipalities absorb the expense of sending out a signal that is HD. This bill clarifies that responsibility for the cost of such transmission is the video service provider, so that they no longer can evade the law.

Finally, this bill retains millions of dollars for local use instead of increasing unearned profits of service providers. Public funds should serve the people who pay them, not increase the profits of private corporations.

I strongly support LD 1967 and ask that you vote that it "ought to pass."

Thank you,
Tom Handel