

Testimony of Town of Waterboro, Maine In Support of LD 1967, An Act To Support Municipal Franchise



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Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
October 16, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler, members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology

I am David Lowe of the Town of Waterboro and I am pleased to support LD1967, An Act To Support Municipal Franchise Agreements. Thank you for considering legislation to protect and expand our ability to get town meetings, school meetings and events, and other public access programming into the homes of our citizens, many of whom are elderly and/or disabled, via franchise fees used to support public access broadcasts. If anything is needed at this time, it is an expansion of Cable and Internet resources in every community so that everyone has equal opportunity to be informed and participate in the goings-on of their schools, local governments and their communities.

As new Video Service Providers (VSP's) enter the market, it is important that they be considered in the same manner as any present video provider(s) in any case where a VSP or ISP utilizes a municipality's public right of way to provide "video to the home" with channel selection applications similar to existing VSP's/ Cable TV operators. Franchise fee revenues are critical in maintaining and upgrading our broadcast infrastructure as well as investing in unserved/underserved areas within our community.

We are requesting that all VSP's be placed under authority of the PUC and Attorney General, not as a regulator, but as a mediator in cases where a municipality must file a non-compliance report due to violation of the Cable Act, FCC Regulations or Maine State Statutes. It is highly important that there be a means by which municipalities may have their concerns and/or disputes heard and addressed fairly within a reasonable timeframe.

We also believe that it is time that High Definition (HD) video be delivered to Public, Education and Government viewers whenever it is provided as such to a VSP.

We live in an age where more people than ever work from home and rely on video transmissions to view and/or participate in meetings. Please support the vital role Community Media plays in this and help protect municipal rights. We need citizens to be engaged in their communities for the good of the entire state of Maine.

Sincerely,

D. J. Lowe

David J. Lowe
Waterboro I.T. Director
Cable TV Committee