



Legislation Text

File #: 02239, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No appropriation required.

Title

Urging the Wisconsin Congressional delegation to oppose legislation that would lead to the elimination of local cable franchising.

Body

WHEREAS, bills have been introduced in the United States House of Representatives (H.R. 3146 - Blackburn-Wynn) and the United States Senate (S. 1349 - Smith Rockefeller and S. 1504 - Ensign - McCain) that would unfairly and needlessly impose restrictions upon the ability of municipalities to exercise appropriate local controls over the provision of communications services in their communities; and,

WHEREAS, these bills would negatively impact cities such as Madison in that they would:

- preempt local franchising for telephone companies and replace local franchising of incumbent cable operators with vague, weak, and unenforceable state or even national franchising;
- replace locally negotiated and controlled PEG (Public, Educational, and Government) Access television requirements with minimum national standards that would not allow financial support for these channels, contrary to current Federal law and the current local franchise agreement, which could result in the loss of important local programming directly relating to the needs and interests of the residents of Madison;
- replace locally determined franchise fees with a uniform national fee structure which would reduce needed revenues to Madison;
- severely restrict the City's ability to manage its public rights-of-way;
- eliminate "build-out" requirements for any video service provider, thereby allowing providers to discriminate based on the wealth of the local neighborhoods they choose to serve;
- deprive local citizens of the ability to address local issues locally, by removing to the state or even the Federal Communications Commission all customer service issues, and further by denying customers any form of recourse for any actions of a communications provider; and

WHEREAS, the City of Madison encourages competition in the delivery of these services, and the resultant benefits to the citizens of Madison that such competition would provide, within the existing legislative and regulatory structure of local franchising; and

WHEREAS, the City of Madison believes that the existing legislative and regulatory structure of local franchising is in the best interests of its citizens and does not impose an undue burden upon the ability of telecommunications companies to introduce their services in this market;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Mayor and Common Council of the City of Madison oppose H.R. 3146, S. 1349, and S. 1504, and urge its Wisconsin Congressional delegation (2nd Congressional District U.S. Representative Tammy Baldwin and United States Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold) to oppose these bills or any similar legislation.