



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Representative Gary Hebl/608-266-7678

INFORMATIONAL COLUMN

PRICE OF CABLE COMPETITION SHOULDN'T BE CUTTING KIDS-4, CONSUMER PROTECTION

Competition in the cable market is better for everyone. Competition drives down prices and makes the available services more responsive to consumer demand. I am strongly in favor of the idea of competition in the cable market.

However, provisions of the Video Competition Act currently being considered by the State Legislature will eliminate consumer protection statutes in place and take away important resources currently available to communities all over the State of Wisconsin. Sun Prairie is one of the communities that will be disproportionately affected in our area. Sun Prairie Community Access Television (SPCATV) and its KIDS-4 station is a first-class broadcasting operation that is produced by kids.

This station and other like it across the state will be negatively affected by this bill. Without modest changes to this bill, passage of this legislation would be devastating to cable access stations like KIDS-4. Encouraging competition is important - but we shouldn't make the quest for competition in the marketplace a race to the bottom.

From the beginning, I have been working closely with officials from the station and the City of Sun Prairie to ensure our kids don't lose opportunities for learning and leadership because of this legislation. As a result of the Video Competition Act, SPCATV would lose nearly \$93,000 - about a third of the station's operating revenue - right off the bat. This would occur because the bill caps the amount of money community access stations receive at 5 percent of gross receipts. Gross receipts are the money cable providers receive from their customers and in turn give to community access stations. The bill has also a limited list of elements included in the definition of gross receipts.

Those factors along with additional alterations to the operations of community access stations, SPCATV and Sun Prairie officials estimate would make initial losses and first year startup costs more than \$210,000 - effectively eliminating KIDS-4.

What's more, according to AT&T officials, the company's stated goals are to expand coverage *only* into areas where they have existing infrastructure. Consequently, because the telecommunications corporation has no existing infrastructure in our area, Sun Prairie customers will receive none of the benefits of competition. Shouldn't we figure out whether there are players on the field before we change the rules of the game? As the bill is currently

written Sun Prairie and other communities stand to receive *all* of the costs and *none* of the benefits from competition.

In the coming weeks, I will pay close attention as this legislation makes its way through the legislative process. To date, I testified at a recent public hearing, I have drafted a series of amendments to address these issues, and I am working closely with members of the committee on both sides of the issue and both sides of the aisle to make sure we have legislation that's fair to everybody. If the final version of the bill will bring greater choice to the consumer, protect community access channels and maintain existing consumer protections, I will support it.

If you have any questions about issue or any legislative matter, please contact my office at (608) 266-7678.

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