



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**GARY HEBL**  
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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INFORMATIONAL COLUMN

**REP. HEBL WORKING TO PROTECT CABLE ACCESS**

SUN PRAIRIE - For more than 30 years, Sun Prairie residents have turned to the stations of KIDS-4 and KSUN-12 for the valuable programming and community services these stations provide.

That's why as State Representative for Sun Prairie, I did all that I could to fix a broken bill that was signed into law last year called the "Cable Competition Bill." But instead of lowering costs to the consumer through competition - as their extensive advertising promised - Sun Prairie has seen no competition enter our market, and the cost to continue receiving the same programming may be going up.

Charter Communications announced recently it plans to move public, education and government (PEG) channels to 900 end of the spectrum. According to published reports, as early as September, viewers will have to go to channel 983 and 984, to find Sun Prairie City Council meetings and school board meetings instead of on familiar channels like 12 and 4.

Moreover, those who don't have a digital television or special equipment will have to pay \$5 more per month to even get these channels.

By my math, that's a cost increase, not a decrease.

For over 25 years, I have been a member of the Sun Prairie Cable Access Board. I believe in the work of Sun Prairie Cable Access Television. Pam Steitz, executive director of Sun Prairie Cable Access Television, and all her staff work very hard to put together worthwhile programming for schools, students and the community at large.

That's why, I am very concerned about the effect these changes are going to have on consumers' ability to view the content on community access stations. With these proposed changes, I believe Sun Prairie Cable Access Television will lose viewers.

In recent weeks, I have been working with Charter, the Wisconsin Association of Public Education and Government Channels (WAPC) as well as our friends at Sun

Prairie Cable Access Television (SPCATV) to find a better solution to this situation.

For many years SPCATV has had positive working relations with Charter, but it's important for the community to know - these changes will be a blow to the station.

Community access channels create a sense of civic unity by broadcasting concerts, plays, sporting events, school functions - the activities that make up the lifeblood of the community. They provide an outlet to budding filmmakers, talk show hosts, and artists.

If Charter insists on moving these channels to the 900 range, I would hope the company would provide free digital converter boxes until the entire line-up of channels is digital. Currently, I am working closely with a group of legislators to keep the channels where they are, or to ensure that no customer has to pay extra to view these channels.

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