

TENNESSEE CABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

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AT&T's Plan is Bad for Tennessee

NASHVILLE – Just four months after its heavily criticized bill to dismantle the consumer-oriented local franchise law – AT&T is making headlines with its plans to try again for statewide video services legislation that would strip controls that protect local governments and consumers.

The Tennessee Cable Telecommunications Association welcomes competition and urges AT&T to play by the rules that currently and fairly apply to all cable/video services companies – rules that require companies to apply for a franchise with individual local governments.

“AT&T wants consumers to believe barriers block its entry into the video market – but it’s just not so. The truth is that the company could walk into any local government city hall today, apply and be granted approval in less than 90 days,” said Stacey B. Briggs, TCTA executive director.

“We welcome AT&T to compete for business, but they should do so by the laws that exist to protect consumers and local governments and that treat all companies the same. The sweetheart legislation AT&T is trying to pass is great for its shareholders, but really, really bad for Tennesseans.”

Throughout Tennessee, newspapers and municipal and county mayors have all weighed in on the cable franchise issue with the overwhelming sentiment that the proposal pushed by AT&T is bad for communities and consumers.

From Memphis across Middle Tennessee and to the Tri-Cities, the opinions delivered this year are clear – removing local control, stripping consumer protections and eliminating build-out requirements is bad policy for Tennessee.

TCTA encourages state lawmakers to listen to the response from local communities and consider whether any action is necessary.

“Much like a bad movie’s reviews, the critical review of AT&T’s bill has been universally panned,” said Briggs. “In small and large cities, the message is clear – this bill is bad news for consumers and communities.”

This is a sampling of the coverage:

“Legislators shouldn’t take regulatory control away from the level of government that is closest to the people.” – *The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal*, April 15, 2007

“Will local governments have the control they need if true authority is in Nashville? Customers will have no local government agency with whom to lodge a complaint over poor service, improper billing or other problems where a controlling authority is essential.” – *Knoxville News Sentinel*, May 8, 2007

“It sounds as if AT&T is asking Tennessee lawmakers to stack the deck in its favor. That would neither be fair nor reflect the true spirit of competition.” – *Johnson City Press* February 25, 2007

“There is no reason the telecommunications giant can’t live by the current rules that give control over cable franchising to local municipalities... We fail to see any advantage to the city or to local residents to give AT&T a free pass to operate with a heavy hand in Jackson or anywhere else in Tennessee.” – *Jackson Sun*, April 23, 2007

“When a sensible apparatus already exists for telecoms to enter into any given market and they would rather change the rules to get a leg up, something isn’t right.” – *Suburban Community News – Shelby, Tipton and Fayette Counties*, May 6, 2007

“City officials say they oppose the legislation, which has been pushed by AT&T and BellSouth, because it could take away local control of revenues, require governments to fund public access channels, and weaken consumer protections.” – *The OakRidger* February 28, 2007

“Soddy-Daisy is concerned that AT&T will build its lines in Chattanooga and ignore the less densely populated areas in parts of Soddy-Daisy. It also worries that under a state agreement the firm will not be as open to donating its services to local public use such as school and municipal meetings or announcements.” – Chattanooga.com, April 6, 2007

“Specifically, it (AT&T) wants a competitive business climate where nobody – nobody – can force it to run wire in lower Antioch, upper Joelton or every hollow in Cannon County if it doesn’t want to.” – *The Tennessean*, April 8, 2007

“If this bill takes shape, this would truly be a sad situation for Nashville’s African American community and indeed the hard-working families throughout the state that do not meet AT&T’s definition of “high value” customers.” – *The Tennessee Tribune*, April 19, 2007

“Lawmakers would be wise to wait on the AT&T bill until they have a better idea of the company’s current DSL capacity and its intentions with regard to future services. As it stands, rural customers don’t get their money’s worth.” – *The (Murfreesboro) Daily News Journal*, April 22, 2007

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