



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

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Mr. Ajit Pai

June 28, 2019

Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Chairman Pai:

We, the League of Women Voters of Newton [Massachusetts] (LWVN), are writing to ask you to please reverse your change to section 621(a)(1) of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984.

Under existing FCC rules, towns and cities are allowed to negotiate franchise agreements with cable television providers. The municipalities can require in their agreements that the cable companies meet certain community needs such as setting aside channels for public, educational or governmental (PEG) access. These needs are funded by the franchise fee in the cable bill customers receive each month.

The FCC's proposal would permit cable companies to assign a value to these channels, deem them in-kind contributions and then subtract that amount, and the value they place on any other in-kind contributions, from the franchise fees the cable company pays the local community, known legally as the local franchising authority (LFA). These in-kind contributions could include free or reduced cable connections to town halls, interactive program guides etc.

It is our understanding that by allowing cable companies to reduce franchise fees by the value of in-kind donations, funding for local PEG stations would be reduced by 30 to 70 percent a year, depending on the community. NewTV, our local access station, uses revenue to provide access to equipment, expertise, local and government programming, School Committee and City Council meetings that you would not see on commercial channels.

The League of Women Voters encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

If this ruling is allowed to stand, NewTV would lose much of this income.
Please let us highlight why this is important to Newton, Massachusetts:

- At this time, due to the reduction in newspaper coverage, NewTV is a main source of local news educational material for our city.
- Programming by individuals and the League of Women Voters addresses such things as the environment, transportation, and housing. Also, of course, City Council and School Committee meetings are televised.
- NewTV and the League of Women Voters provide non-partisan information to voters by producing candidate forums.
- Without a strong medium that can facilitate communication with the city, there is no independent source of information.

Without Local Access television, the League at the state and local level will struggle to achieve its mission: *"The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA), a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy."*

Therefore we ask that you please reverse your decision.

Sincerely yours,

Marcia Johnson

Marcia Johnson
President, League of Women Voters, Newton