

TENNESSEE CABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

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Consumer Groups Join Mounting Opposition to Shortcut Legislation

NASHVILLE – The number of consumer groups opposed to AT&T’s plan to dismantle the local franchising system for video services continues to grow as organizations learn about the potential for lost consumer protections.

The Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of American and the U.S. Public Interest Groups have now stated opposition to Senate Bill 1933/House Bill 1421, citing the legislation’s diminishment or outright elimination of many protections that today ensure quality service to consumers through contracts reached with local governments.

“Although the video franchise bill pending before the legislature purports to benefit consumers with new competition, if enacted in its current form, it would do more harm than good. This bill does not protect consumers against discriminatory pricing nor does it guarantee that new communications technologies will be offered throughout the state, to all communities” said Mark Cooper, Director of Research for the Consumer Federation of America.

Other individuals and groups opposed to the bill include: National Congress of Black Women; Free Press; U.S. Public Interest Research Group; League of Rural Voters; Broadband Everywhere; Rosetta Miller Perry, Publisher and Owner, The Tennessee Tribune, and founding member, Nashville Black Chamber of Commerce; TSU Student Government Association, Hodari Brown (President); Beech Creek Missionary Baptist Church, Reverend Davie Tucker Jr.; Early Grove Baptist Church Memphis, Herman A. Powell, Sr. (Pastor)

“Local franchises foster competition and easily welcome new entrants, such as phone companies seeking to be the fourth or fifth video provider in most markets. Don’t hold your breath expecting dramatic price cuts from telephone entry into a competitive marketplace. (AT&T) Executives admit that they will not engage in a price war with cable companies” said Dr. E. Faye Williams, National Chairwoman, National Congress of Black Women, Washington.

The Tennessee Municipal League and the Tennessee County Services Association are also opposed to the bill. This includes Metro Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Tri-Cities. In opposing the bill, local governments cite removal of consumer protections and erasure of provisions that today ensure access to all residents in a community.

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