

Bad News for Free Speech

For the last 30 years cable companies have been obliged to give back a very small percentage of their earnings for the public good: Public Access Television. They provided education, facilities and equipment to help the public have a voice.

Two years ago, a little known piece of legislation was passed in Sacramento (Assembly Bill 2987 (DIVCA)). It relieves the cable companies from the fiscal obligation to provide Public Access stations. The legislation went into effect on January 1st of this year, effectively ending Public Access Television in California.

In the City of Los Angeles, the number of Public Access Television stations has been scaled back from 13 to 1.

This is a major blow to free speech in our city.

The Internet is home to 22.6 million bloggers and 3.25 billion videos viewed on YouTube, most of them seen or read only by close friends. However, Public Access Television is viewed directly, by 600,000 in L.A. alone.

In the age of "over-information," it is unlikely that such broad grassroots, social reforms such as women's suffrage or the Civil Rights movement could ever gather steam by reaching enough people.

Please get active and write your local state Assemblyperson and City Council representatives.

For more information, please view the following links:

<http://www.laweekly.com/2008-12-11/news/shutting-down-public-access-tv/>

<http://www.fulldisclosure.net/>

<http://www.lacity.org/ITA/Residents/VideoServicesCableTV/VideoServicesCableTVHome/index.htm>

<http://www.lacity.org/ITA/Residents/VideoServicesCableTV/P.E.G.Access/index.htm>

Best Regards,

Jessica Sterling

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