

CHARLES B. RANGEL  
15TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
NEW YORK

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## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

October 31, 2009

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Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

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

RE: Petitions before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for Declaratory Ruling re: Public, Educational and Governmental Access Channels, MB Docket No. 0913, CSR 8126 (ACM et al.), CRS 8127 (City of Lansing, MI), and CSR 8128 (City of Dearborn, MI et al.)

Dear Commissioners:

For over 40 years, Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access cablecast channels have been forums for free speech, for the development of a marketplace of ideas, and for the exercise of citizens' First Amendment rights. PEG channels increase public access to the day-to-day workings of local civic processes and institutions, including the broadcasting of community meetings, local election debates, public hearings, public policy for a and community events with both live and taped cable casts.

However, several cable systems are proposing changes to their programming that threaten to make this free content less accessible to the public. That is why I am urging the Federal Communications Commission to grant the three above-mentioned petitions as soon as possible.

This action will be invaluable in helping to safeguard localism and diversity in the nation's media landscape. PEG channels are a unique source of community-based, local information across the nation, especially in my Congressional District. These stations, and the passionate coalition of staff and volunteers that run them, are powerful living examples of how democracy is strongest when its citizens can engage in the full and free exchange of information and ideas.

This fact was recognized by a recent bipartisan report entitled, *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*. The 17-member Committee on the Information Needs in a Democracy, which included former FCC chairmen Michael Powell and Reed Hundt said in their report that, "Public, educational, and government cable channels belong in a favored tier in terms of ease of access." This statement goes to the core of the three above referenced petitions.

*MB  
PEG  
PV  
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1883*

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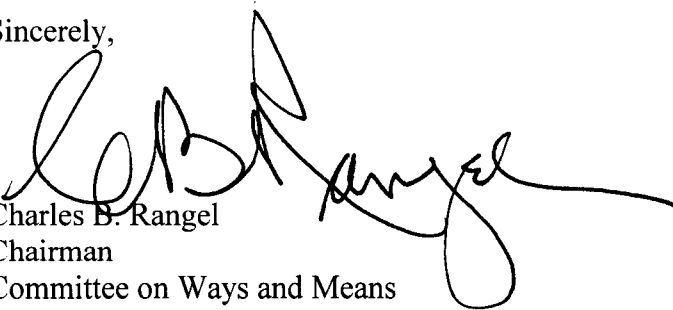
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As such, it is imperative that the FCC take action to uphold and enforce the provisions of the 1984 Cable Act. Any system rendering PEG channels inaccessible to viewers and stripping those channels of closed captioning and second audio programming (tools benefiting literacy and language development) dismisses the needs of significant sectors of the community.

I urge the Commission to grant all three petitions as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. B. Rangel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles B. Rangel  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means