



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

TESTIMONY OF MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT SCOTT STRINGER
before the NYC COUNCIL LAND USE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTION 136

May 4, 2006

Good morning, my name is Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President. Thank you Chairwoman Katz for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Resolution 136 which opposes federal legislation intended to strip municipalities of the ability to negotiate franchise agreements for cable or internet service.

This is a clear case of the federal government interceding into a local system which operates well and best serves the needs of local residents in order to demand a one-size fits all approach which will benefit corporations not residents. Local cable franchising ensures that local cable operators are allowed access to our city streets in a fair manner while other users of the streets are not unduly inconvenienced. Regulation on the local level requires maintenance and upgrade of facilities are undertaken in accordance with local requirements.

Local cable franchising also ensures that specific needs are met and that local customers are protected from service outages and other problems. When residents in our locality confront new problems, we can address them in the franchise process. A federalized process would be strapped to figure out the individual cable or internet problems in



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Strongsville, Ohio, San Diego, California and New York, New York then propose one national solution.

Local franchises thus provide a means for local government to appropriately oversee the operations of cable service providers in the public interest, and to ensure compliance with local laws. There is no need in this instance to create a new Federal bureaucracy in Washington to handle matters of specifically local interest.

Finally, in New York City, Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access provides thousands of hours of local programs each week to residents, such as City Council meetings and hearings, community and neighborhood events and forums, foreign language programming, health care information, school sports, services for houses of worship, and legislative updates. Public access channels in Manhattan allow residents to exercise their First Amendment Rights and to create opportunities for non-commercial communication, education, and artistic expression on an open and equitable basis. Local franchises allow each community to have a voice in how local cable systems will be implemented and what features (such as PEG access, institutional networks or local emergency alerts, etc.) will be available to meet local needs.

I support Resolution 136 by Councilmember Gale Brewer and look forward to working with her and this committee to stop this ill crafted attempt by the federal government to usurp local authority.