

MANHATTAN NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK  
**SAVE ACCESS TV TOOLKIT**  
TOOLS FOR A DEMOCRATIC MEDIA





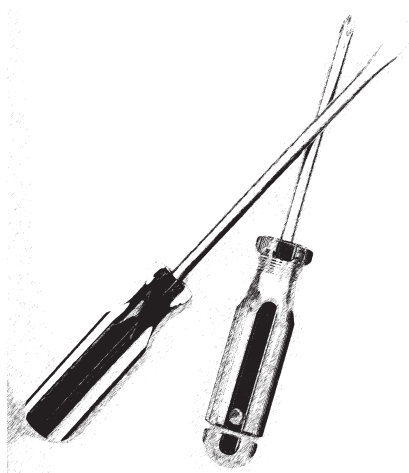
## What is this SAVE ACCESS TV TOOLKIT?

Community Access TV is a part of local American life. It's a cornerstone of our democracy and a place where local values and local points-of-view can be expressed through the medium of local cable television.

But today Community Access TV is under threat nationwide. Proposed changes in the nation's Telecommunications Laws could undermine or even end Community Access TV.

Imagine your community without 'Educational Access' shows for youth and life-long learners. Without 'Governmental Access' shows to keep you informed about local government affairs. And without 'Public Access Television' where community groups and individuals can make and air the shows and points-of-view that matter to them! We cannot let any legislation destroy Community Access TV!

This TOOLKIT has been put together for you to use in your efforts to SAVE ACCESS TV. It contains some of the tools and resources you will need to get started as you advocate on behalf of Community Access TV.



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This TOOLKIT is available as a free PDF download at [www.saveaccess.org](http://www.saveaccess.org) or [www.mnn.org/saveaccess](http://www.mnn.org/saveaccess)  
To have a copy of the TOOLKIT mailed to you call the hotline at: (212) 757-2670 x308 Or email your request to: [saveaccess@mnn.org](mailto:saveaccess@mnn.org)



## **ACTION ALERT!**

### **FIGHT FOR ACCESS TV MOVES TO THE SENATE!**

On June 8th the House of Representatives voted in favor of the COPE Act (HR. 5252). The COPE Act jeopardizes the future funding and channel space for Public, Educational and Governmental Access TV (PEG)--it ends the long established local franchising system, and it opens the door to telecommunications service 'redlining' and the end of Internet 'net-neutrality'.

On June 28th the Senate Commerce Committee completed 'mark up' the Stevens bill (S.2686/Communications, Consumers' Choice, and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006). This controversial bill has met with considerable resistance for not containing protections for Internet 'net-neutrality', or protections against the 'redlining' of rural, minority, or low income communities. It would effectively end the ability of local communities to control telecommunications franchising--but currently it does contain provisions which support Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) TV.

#### ***What happens next?***

Next the Stevens bill will have to be voted on in the full Senate; it is not yet clear when this will happen but we have to assume it will be before Washington's summer recess. If the Senate passes the Stevens bill then the House and Senate will go into 'conference' to reconcile the House COPE bill and the Senate Stevens bill--and hammer out a bill acceptable to both. This takes place behind closed doors--and there's no knowing what would come out of the process.

#### ***What can you do?***

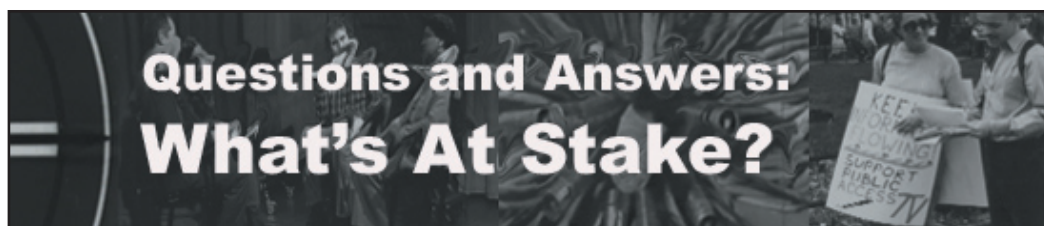
Right now we all need to contact our representatives in the Senate to let them know they must support Community Access TV--and oppose any legislation that would allow the redlining of our communities or put control of the Internet into the hands of big corporations.

Visit **[www.saveaccess.org](http://www.saveaccess.org)** to electronically send letters to your Senators, and take a few minutes to call their offices to let them know you support Community Access TV--***and they must support it too!***

***We need to give ammunition to those Senators who support PEG TV and the free Internet--and who oppose redlining!***

***We need to educate those Senators who don't understand the issues!  
And we need to stop those Senators who oppose PEG TV and a free Internet!  
Contact you Senators now!***

For daily updates on this legislation go to: [www.saveaccess.org](http://www.saveaccess.org)



**Question. What is the current danger to Community Access TV?**

**Answer.** In recent months a variety of legislation has been proposed in Washington that would seriously impact or even end Community Access TV. The most recent legislation to keep an eye are: 1) the COPE Act of 2006 (The Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement Act of 2006)—COPE replaces earlier bills such the BITS bill and The Video Choice Act of 2005. 2) And in the Senate the Stevens bill (S.2686/Communications, Consumer Choice and Broadband Deployment Act).

**Question. What is behind this new legislation?**

**Answer.** In the past phone companies provided phone service, and cable TV companies provided cable TV service. With digital Broadband this is changing and the phone companies want to get into the “triple-play” service business—providing phone, data, and video-service. By providing video-service they will be directly competing with the cable TV companies—but they don’t want to play by the same rule as the cable TV companies—specifically they don’t want to negotiate or operate with local franchises. They also don’t want to have to uphold Internet ‘net-neutrality’ or abide by rules that prevent the redlining of selected communities—such as rural or low income communities.

**Question. Why are local franchises important for Community Access TV?**

**Answer.** A local franchise is an agreement between a city, town, or region and a telecommunication company. It basically says that in return for running their cables on streets and publicly owned property (called the Public-Rights-Of-Way) a telecommunications company must pay rent and agree to certain local stipulations—such as responding to consumer complaints, serving all people who request service (Universal Service), providing channel space and resources for Community Access TV, and supporting the educational Institutional Network (I-Net). Local franchises ensure that telecommunications companies pay fair compensation to local communities for using the publicly owned infrastructure—they are an important way of making sure these huge corporations are responsive to local needs and consumer complaints—and the local franchising system is based on the principal that local communities should be able to govern themselves.

**Question. What do the phone companies want?**

**Answer.** For decades cable TV companies have successfully operated with local franchises, but the phone companies claim local franchises are slow to negotiate and instead they want to have one federal franchise—or franchises state by state.

**Question. Why are some politicians proposing these bills.**

**Answer.** Some politicians say these bills will create competition between cable TV companies and phone companies—and it will bring down the cost of video-services for





consumers. But a lot of what they're saying is straight from the mouths of "think-tanks" funded by the telecommunications industry. Everyone agrees cable TV rates are exorbitantly high, but opponents of these bills—including many consumer groups—say these changes will not lower rates. Instead they are a form of deregulation taking control away from local communities—and the idea that the phone companies are going to be good guys in battle with the cable TV companies is ridiculous! If the phone companies get their way and a federal franchise is put in place, what are consumers going to do if they have complaints about their cable service—call Washington?

**Question. What is Community Access TV and why is it so important?**

**Answer.** Community Access TV is the umbrella name for **Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) TV**—America's local television channels.

**Public Access TV** is a unique public communications forum where ordinary individuals or community organizations can make and air programming that reflects their interests or points-of-view. An estimated 1.2 million Americans regularly volunteer at Public Access TV stations—and over a quarter of a million community organizations produce their own television programs. Public Access TV creates and airs more new programming each week than all the networks combined—programming reflecting the experiences of local communities, and including every imaginable religious, cultural or political expression. Democracy is strongest when a diversity of opinions can be heard—and Public Access TV is a place where this happens.

**Educational Access TV** is an integral part of America's educational system—providing channel space and resources for distance learning in rural or underserved communities, adult learning programs, and programming to accompany vocational or college level courses.

**Governmental Access TV** is an integral part of local government in action—around the country Governmental Access TV keeps the citizenry informed about local political matters—such as local elections or council votes, school board meetings, and housing or employment services. Mainstream television and radio are notoriously ineffective at covering local issues—Governmental Access TV informs the local citizenry about the local governance issues that effect their lives!

Community Access TV is also an important local part of our nation's emergency alert system—providing the public with warnings about local emergencies or disaster management issues.





## What can you do at the Local Level?

### Getting Started:

If we are to preserve Community Access TV now and in the future we must organize on a local and national level to make it happen. Here are some basic things you can do to get started.

#### **1. Get the Community Involved:**

If we are going to defeat this legislation we need to get people involved, and to educate the public and our political leaders about what is at stake. Begin by organizing key members of your community into a SAVE ACCESS TV campaign (start a coordinated letter writing campaign--phone or meet with elected officials—prepare to travel to Washington or your state capitol if the need arises). Its good to have lots of people involved--but don't underestimate the impact even a small group of motivated individuals can have. The clock is now ticking!

Call a meeting at your local Community Access TV station or public meeting place. Invite Public Access TV producers, local officials, and representatives from community organizations that air programs on Community Access TV. At the meeting stress the positive role Community Access TV plays in your community and the danger this legislation poses to it. Get contact information from attendees (including phone & email and the best time to reach them), and ask them to sign up for an action-alert "phone tree".

#### **2. Get Local Community Organizations Involved:**

More than a quarter of a million Community Organizations (such as faith based organizations, labor unions, arts groups, disabled and seniors organizations, Etc.) make programming for Community Access TV. These organizations understand the valuable role Community Access TV plays in servicing their constituency--let them know about the danger we face!

#### **Ask these Community Organizations to:**

- 1) Write a letter of "Endorsement" supporting your local SAVE ACCESS TV campaign (see Endorsement Form included in this Toolkit). Take copies of these Endorsements forms to your meetings with politicians.
- 2) Ask community organizations to help set up meetings with key politicians or to share their media contacts with your SAVE ACCESS TV organization.
- 3) Get community organizations to talk about the issue to their membership, and to list it on their website or in their newsletter.



# SIX

### 3. Educate Your Local Politicians:

Inform your local elected officials (City Councilors, Local Community Boards, Borough Presidents, County Leaders, Mayors, Public Advocates, Etc.) about the far-reaching consequences of this legislation. Many elected officials support Community Access TV, but they may not know that it is under threat. Point out to them the important role Community Access TV plays in your community--supporting free speech, keeping the citizenry informed about local government affairs, educating and entertaining your community!

#### **GET YOUR TOWN OR CITY TO PASS A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THIS LEGISLATION!**

Ask your elected officials to sponsor a local "Resolution" in opposition to this legislation. In recent months dozens of cities and towns around the country have proposed or passed local resolutions saying that Washington shouldn't introduce legislation that would damage Community Access TV.

Check the website of The National League of Cities to see their stance on this issue. ([http://www.nlc.org/Issues/Telecommunications\\_\\_\\_Technology/index.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/Issues/Telecommunications___Technology/index.cfm))

### 4. Invite the Press:

Contact local reporters and journalists and ask them to investigate the many ways this legislation would impact your community. Use the Talking Points and Resources sections included in this Toolkit to spark their interest in issues such as "redlining" or the loss of local revenue that would come with the end of Local Franchising. Identify some of the programs on your Community Access TV station that play an important role in the life of your community, and encourage reporters to write about positive illustrations of Community Access TV at work.



#### **Are we citizens with democratic right or just consumers?**

The telecommunications companies pushing this legislation talk about the public only as consumers; but citizenship is more than buying things, it's about free speech and having a voice in the life of our communities. We need Community Access TV to nurture democracy and freedom of expression in our towns and cities. And we need to tell the telecommunications companies that we are not consumers, we are principled citizens who demand access to a democratic media.





## What can you do at the National Level?

### Getting Started:

The action on this issue is now taking place and the House and the Senate--so it's vitally important you let your Congressional Representatives and Senators that they must support Community Access TV. Congresspeople and Senators are closely linked to city council members, local community boards, and local community organizations--so local organizing can directly affect them.

#### **1. Contact your Representatives in the House and Senate:**

Organize into small groups of Community Access TV advocates and set up a face-to-face meetings with your elected officials. Make blank letters or postcards for the public to fill out, and flood elected official's offices with these letters and cards. (But remember all mail is not equal; a handwritten letter is more powerful than a mass produced card; and a face-to-face meeting with a politician is more powerful than a phone call or letter.)

#### ***Which Politicians is it most important to contact?:***

Some politicians are more influential on this issue than others. Find out if any of your local Congressional representatives are members of the "House Energy and Commerce Committee" or "Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation", or if any of them are co-sponsors of this legislation (this can be reaserched at [www.govtrack.us/](http://www.govtrack.us/)). Representatives sitting on these committees play a big role in developing this legislation so we need to contact them straight away to voice our support for Community Access TV. Remember, this legislation is so far reaching that politicians may not have considered all of its consequences - we have to educate them!

#### **2. At Your State Capitol:**

There has been a push in many states to have statewide franchises introduced as a replacement for Local Franchises (see Texas case below). This is very dangerous for Community Access TV so we must be vigilant about what is going on at the state level, and we must build relationships with State Legislators and other officials to make our support for Community Access TV heard at the state level.

**3. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** (the government agency in charge of regulating telecommunications) plays a big role in shaping telecommunications





policy in Washington so it's important that they know the public supports Community Access TV. Keep an eye out for FCC hearings or decisions on changes in telecommunications rules ([www.fcc.gov/](http://www.fcc.gov/)).

**4. Staying Informed and Keeping Your Allies Informed:** Check out the national SAVE ACCESS TV website at [www.saveaccess.org/](http://www.saveaccess.org/)  
And join The Alliance For Community Media and become a member of the ACM "listserve" ([www.alliancecm.org/index.php?page\\_id=9](http://www.alliancecm.org/index.php?page_id=9)).

**NO ON COPE--CAN YOU HEAR US NOW?**

On May 24th 2006 hundreds of protestors assembled outside Verizon offices in New York, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco to protest the phone companies' huge lobbying effort to have the industry-friendly COPE ACT passed--over the interests of the public and the rights of citizens!



**Question: A statewide franchise was introduced in Texas, what impact did it have?**

**Answer:** On September 7th 2005 Texas signed a law that replaced Local Franchises with a statewide franchise. Only three months after this legislation was passed, San Antonio's Public Access TV was faced with closure when its Local Franchise expired and the statewide rules came into effect. Other Public Access TV stations will almost certainly face the same fate. To get legislation passed in Texas the telecom giants SBC and Verizon unleashed a massive, down-and-dirty last-ditch lobbying campaign. Many states, including Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, are now considering legislation that could have the same impact. Others are certain to follow!

For more information about the Texas case go to: <http://www.freepress.net/defendlocalaccess/=TX>



## ***Our main concerns about the current legislation!***

### ***ONE—Threat to Community Access TV***

We are opposed to any legislation that endangers Community Access TV—by stripping the public of channel space—or would limit, reduce, or end the equipment, training, and other resources the public needs to make Community Access TV. No matter what new technology comes along Community Access TV must be a part of the package!

### ***TWO—Redlining***

We are opposed to any legislation that does not require video-service companies to provide services to all people who request it. Without so called “Universal Service” or “Build Out” requirements video-service companies will be able to “cherry-pick” the most profitable neighborhoods—and skip over less profitable ones. This Redlining would mean that low income, minority and rural communities might never get Broadband services—thereby contributing to the growing digital divide between media-haves and media-have-nots.

### ***THREE—Net Neutrality***

We are opposed to any legislation that does not guarantee Net Neutrality. At the moment the Internet has Network Neutrality, but this legislation includes nothing to stop the telecommunication companies that own the wires from introducing a “tiered” pay-as-you-go system where content they favor would be accessible very quickly—while content they do not favor will travel at a snails pace! The Internet has fostered new expression and communication by the public and allowed small businesses to prosper—this will be jeopardized if there is no Network Neutrality!

### ***FOUR—Local Control***

We are opposed to any legislation that would strip communities of local control of Community Access TV. America is made up of many different local experiences— the strength of Community Access TV rests on its responsiveness the to local communities it serves. Community Access TV cannot be designed ‘one-size-fits-all’ in Washington. America’s local television channels must be designed by the local communities that use them—and by local people who know how Community Access TV can best serve their community!





## THE TEN CORE VALUES OF COMMUNITY ACCESS TV

- 1 Localism:** Public Access TV supports local viewpoints, local perspectives, and the interests of local communities. Most mainstream media programming is intended for national audiences and does not reflect the rich diversity of American community life. Local communities must be able to make and air media that reflects the local experiences.
- 2 Democracy:** Our society is founded on a belief in freedom of expression and free speech. Democracy works best when a wide array of voices and opinions can be seen and heard. Public Access TV is one of the nation's richest "market-places of ideas".
- 3 Diversity:** The First Amendment says everyone has the right to voice their opinion; no-one will agree with everything they see on Public Access TV, but we should all support the fundamental right of everyone to have the opportunity to speak their mind.
- 4 Access For All:** Public Access TV is committed to serving all communities whether large or small (Narrowcasting). Commercial television's dependence on advertising revenue forces it to appeal to the largest audience possible, and to sink to the lowest common denominator. A basic tenant of civil society is that the lives of all members of the community are important, and all members of society should be able to represent themselves in the media. In our 'digital-divide' era, equal access to the media is more important than ever for underserved, low income, and communities of color.
- 5 Universal Service:** Everyone should be able to be connected to video-service if they choose to be. Video Service companies must serve all communities and not just 'cherry-pick' the most profitable ones.
- 6 Non-commercial:** Public Access TV is an essential component in our public-media 'green-space' where, like a public park, we can reflect on who we are without the interference of commercial values.
- 7 Local government:** Many of the decisions that most affect our lives are made at the local level by city councils, school boards, mayors, and so on. Community Access TV keeps the public informed about local government elections, about health services, about public housing, and about other important local political and economic development activities. The mainstream media is notoriously ineffective at covering local government issues. Community Access TV is an important part of our system of local government.
- 8 Education:** Public, Educational and Government (PEG) TV plays an important role in our educational system. It provides channels for use by schools, libraries and colleges; and it is especially important for the education of low-income and rural communities.
- 9 Public Safety:** In many areas Community Access TV provides channels for emergency information and community alerts.
- 10 Electronic Greenspace:** All communication using the Public-Right-Of-Way or Public-Airwaves should provide space for Community Access Media.





## Staying Informed

For daily updates on the fight to preserve Community Access TV go to  
**SAVE ACCESS** at: [www.saveaccess.org](http://www.saveaccess.org)

### **Manhattan Neighborhood Network**

537 West 59th Street, NY 10019  
[www.mnn.org/saveaccess](http://www.mnn.org/saveaccess)  
MNN is one of the largest Public Access TV center in the U.S., and a leader in the campaign to SAVE ACCESS.

### **Portland Community Media (PCM)**

<http://www.pcm.tv.org/>  
Oregon's PCM Access TV center offers useful introductory information in a "Call To Action" section of their website.

### **People's Guide to the Telecommunications Act of 2006**

A must read for understanding what's ahead.  
<http://www.cctv.org/advocacy.htm#peoplesguide>

### **Media Policy Blog**

<http://www.mediapolicyblog.org/>

### **Free Press**

<http://freepress.net/defendlocalaccess/>  
The Free Press is a national organization working for the public interest in the media. The Free Press' website offers up-to-date coverage of community TV policy issues.

### **The Alliance for Community Media (ACM)**

666 11th Street NW, Suite 740, Washington DC, 20001  
<http://www.alliancecm.org/>  
The ACM is a national organization that represents PEG TV in Washington.

### **The Benton Foundation**

Benton Foundation\_1625 K Street, NW  
11th Floor,\_Washington, DC 20006  
<http://www.benton.org/>  
Benton's website offers updates and analysis on current public-interest and media issues.

### **National Journal's Technology Daily**

<http://nationaljournal.com/about/technologydaily>  
Daily updates on telecommunications issues.

### **Grassroots Cable**

<http://www.grassrootscable.com/>  
"Grassrootscable is a collaboration between media activists from different cities around the US, working together to build coordinated campaigns to hold cable companies accountable to the public."

### **National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA)**

<http://www.natoa.org>  
NATOA represents the needs and interests of local governments in cases before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Federal Courts, Congress and the states.

### **Our Allies:**

#### **National League of Cities**

[http://www.nlc.org/Issues/Telecommunications\\_\\_\\_Technology/index.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/Issues/Telecommunications___Technology/index.cfm)  
The National League of Cities and largest national organization representing municipal governments, they are a supporter of local control of telecommunications.

#### **The Consumers Union:**

[www.consumersunion.org/](http://www.consumersunion.org/)  
While advocating on behalf of consumers on a whole spectrum of issues, the Consumers Union has been vocal in support of "Network Neutrality" and other telecommunications issues. See their telcom campaign website at [www.HearUsNow.org](http://www.HearUsNow.org)

For a listing of (PEG) TV centers in the US :  
<http://world.std.com/~rghm/alpha.htm>

For a worldwide listing of PEG TV go to:  
<http://www.communitymedia.se/cat/linksus.htm>

For a Public Access TV history read: "The History of Public Access Television" by Bill Olson. Go to: <http://www.geocities.com/iconostar/history-public-access-TV.html>





# SAVE COMMUNITY ACCESS TV!

INSTRUCTIONS: ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD COMPLETE THIS ENDORSEMENT FORM AND RETURN IT TO THEIR LOCAL ACCESS TV CENTER OR SAVE ACCESS TV ORGANIZATION

To: (YOUR LOCAL ACCESS TV CENTER OR SAVE ACCESS CAMPAIGN)

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Your Community Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone number

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fax number

\_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Web page address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact Person

## YES! WE MUST STOP ALL BILLS THAT THREATEN COMMUNITY ACCESS TV!

### YES! Our Organization Pledges To:

Check all that apply:

- ENDORSE COMMUNITY ACCESS TV IN OUR AREA.** We allow you to use our organization's name in conjunction with your efforts to communicate the importance of Community Access TV to our elected officials and the general public.
- EDUCATE OUR MEMBERSHIP** We will educate our membership about this issue and encourage them to send postcards in support of Community Access TV to elected representatives or join our Action-Alert-Contact-Tree.
- CONTACT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS** We will contact the Mayor, Congress and Senate representatives, the Borough President, and City Council or County leaders, and let them know our organization supports Community Access TV.
- PROMOTE & PUBLICIZE** Our organization will post information in our upcoming community bulletin or newsletter. We will announce it on our website and offer a link to the SAVE ACCESS website (<http://mnn.org/saveaccess/>).
- INVITE A SPEAKER TO OUR UPCOMING EVENT** We will invite a speaker from the SAVE ACCESS TV campaign to make a short presentation on this issue at our organizations' next meeting.

Please return this completed form to: (YOUR LOCAL ACCESS TV CENTER OR SAVE ACCESS CAMPAIGN)

**Time To Tell  
the Senate:  
SAVE PUBLIC  
ACCESS TV!**



On June 8th the House of Representatives voted in favor of the COPE Act (HR. 5252). The COPE Act jeopardizes the future funding and channel space for Public, Educational and Governmental Access TV (PEG).

But the fight is far from over. A companion bill must be passed in the Senate before COPE can be written into law. The Senate bill is called the Communications, Consumers' Choice, and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006 (S.2686), and the Senate could vote on it in July!

It is urgently important that we let our Senators know they must amend or oppose this bill! Take a few minutes from your schedule and go to:

<http://saveaccess.org/takeaction>

Send electronic letters to your Senators, and then call their offices with your comments. Please tell your friends and family to do the same! Time is running out!

[www.saveaccess.org](http://www.saveaccess.org)

*Photocopy onto card-stock and cut into four cards.*

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