



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN
EDUCATION FUND**

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February 24, 2010

To: Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs

Re: Support of AB 721

The League understands that a viable democracy relies on an informed electorate. Only with in-depth information and open decision-making can citizens make wise choices when they vote. We advocate for open meetings, open airwaves and open discussion, regardless of the issue or technology involved.

Public, Education and Government (PEG) access channels are committed to such openness. The League of Women Voters uses PEG access around Wisconsin and the nation to educate ourselves and the public, all for the purpose of providing the in-depth information about issues and governmental policies so critical to a healthy democracy. PEG Access may be the only true “public” forum among current media options.

In 2007 we opposed passage of the Video Competition Bill (Act 42) primarily because of the affect it would have on public access. Supporters of the bill predicted it would result in lowered cable rates. Yet in the first two years rates rose by an average of 21% for basic service and 15% for expanded basic cable, and now they are even higher. Worse, the public access channels on which the League depends for following local government meetings and for broadcasting candidate and issue forums have been moved to remote areas of the spectrum and are facing severe funding cuts, jeopardizing their very existence. Open government and voter education are core activities of the League of Women Voters, and our ability to carry out our mission has been harmed by the passage of Act 42.

AB 721 would repair two areas of damage done by Act 42: it would bring the PEG channels back into the mainstream of the channel lineup and restore the funding that was taken away by the previous bill. We urge you to support this bill, which is so important in promoting an informed electorate.

Thank you.

