



Erik Arne Mattila
Imperial Valley, California
Graphic Designer/Parapalegic

“For people with disabilities, the results of a competitive video industry mean more than just additional entertainment options and lower cable rates.”

For a person with a hearing, visual or physical disability, it can mean an enhanced quality of life and the chance to participate in professional, recreational, and community activities that are currently difficult or impossible to enjoy without the assistance of technology.

As a Web site designer and artist, the ability to better communicate electronically would literally expand my world. My wheelchair restricts my movement, but it has no power over my creativity. Given technology, there’s no limit to what I can do as an artist.

With technologies that bring the sights, sounds, and resources of the outside world directly to the home, people with all types of disabilities can benefit from telemedicine that allows doctors to examine the patient and review critical personal information without being in the same location. Interactive video capabilities can let users take classes, attend meetings, or receive important information about community resources.

I support the move to update the current cable franchise laws so that every American – regardless of location or physical ability – has the same opportunity to benefit from what the future of the video and communications world can offer us.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Enlightened public officials at local, state and federal levels are working to update cable franchise laws and encourage competition in the cable television industry.

Americans who want better price, better service and better options can help those officials by supporting pro-consumer, pro-competition legislation.

- Write letters to lawmakers supporting change.
- Enlist others to do the same.
- Send letters to your local newspaper and encourage editorials favoring competition.
- Join Consumers for Cable Choice and let the national alliance speak for you.



Ted Taylor and Ken MacLaughlin
San Leandro, California
Seniors/Neighborhood Watchdogs

“Just like any age group, America’s senior citizens are a diverse lot.”

Some are in great physical shape and very active. Some are doing just OK. Some are frail. For most of them, television is an important part of their daily lives, offering entertainment, important information and educational programs.

It’s a service seniors both want and need. But for too many of them, continual escalation in cost is making it an unaffordable luxury. Even for those seniors in comfortable financial conditions, the price of TV is still an issue.

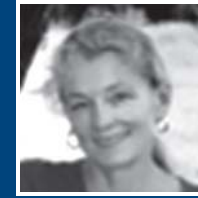
In our 366-unit Mission Bay Mobile Home Park, we thought we had a great deal when one of the nation’s largest cable companies offered a one-year special contract for \$49 a month. When the 12 months were up, though, the cost shot up to \$103 and kept climbing. Most of our neighbors didn’t think they had any alternative if they wanted to stay tuned in. Some didn’t know they could negotiate a better deal. We don’t think it’s fair that monopolistic cable companies can hold back good deals for only the few who know to keep negotiating when informed of a rate change. We don’t think it’s right that rates can just climb while service either stagnates or gets worse.

Satellite service is a good option, and one that many residents chose, but we’d like even more competition than just cable or satellite. We want as many competitors as possible in the marketplace so everyone can get the best deals possible.

Those of us in good shape get out and travel, but there are a lot of people our age – and younger – who can’t get out. Television is their window on the world. We need to find ways to make it affordable – and competition is the best way to get that done.



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Kathy Moore
Woodward, Oklahoma
Mother/Grandmother/Rural American

“This is supposed to be the Digital Age – even in rural Oklahoma where I’ve chosen to raise my family.”

When my children were young and there weren’t dozens of channels, I didn’t feel like I had to police the television. Today, I’m raising my grandchildren with cable television that offers a plethora of channels that offer violence, bad language and other unsuitable topics but only a few channels that I feel good about.

Our cable package gives us nature, discovery, education and history channels, which are great. I would also love to have National Public Radio and classical music like Oklahoma State University offers. That kind of programming isn’t offered in my part of the state, and there’s not an alternative cable provider in the area. I’m sure I’m not the only parent or grandparent who wishes we had more quality programs.

While the content is my biggest concern, I would also really like better reception and service quality. It’s not uncommon at all to have unexplained noises and bad reception. Our cable service is really not worth what we pay for it, but tornadoes are not uncommon here, and I feel like I have to have cable in order to get weather advisories and warnings.

In addition to our cable service, we have high-speed Internet service from our phone company. We have two computers hooked up at the moment. When my kids come home from college there are five computers all hooked up – and I’d like service that would allow us to all work at the same time if we need to.

I want competition in the cable industry because our current cable franchise regulations haven’t given me the level of service and programming options my family wants and deserves.

I want to feel good about what my kids are learning from television. I want quality reception and quality programming. I want Internet service I can rely on as an educational resource for my kids. And I want all of that at a reasonable price. I believe competition will give me those things. The current system certainly hasn’t.

About Consumers for Cable Choice, Inc.

Headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind. Consumers for Cable Choice, Inc. is a national alliance of consumer advocacy groups, private citizens and others who are committed to promoting maximum choice for consumers in cable, video and broadband services. Consumers for Cable Choice uses a combination of education and grassroots advocacy to impact change, which will result in a deregulated and pro-consumer market that stimulates fair price, more choices and better service options in the cable television industry.

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COMPETITION IN THE CABLE INDUSTRY:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Small Business Owners | | People with Disabilities |
| | Parents | |
| Rural Residents | | Sports Fans |
| | Educators | |
| Seniors | | Minorities |

IT MATTERS TO ME!



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WHY IT MATTERS:

If you have ever thought that it would be great if you had an alternative to your cable company, then the debate on competition to cable matters to you. If you are dissatisfied with cable's rising rates, lousy customer service, poor quality of programming, or you feel trapped by your current cable provider, then the debate on cable competition matters to you. If you wish your small business or community group could communicate as effectively as big companies and organizations, then the debate on cable competition matters to you.

The debate on cable competition matters to every American. For some people, the debate is about better prices and better television programming. For others, it's about access to life-saving communication services. The potential that a thriving, competitive environment offers is limited only by American innovation and ingenuity.

CONSIDER THIS...

In most industries, technological advances drive down the cost of services. But according to the Federal Communications Commission, cable prices increased 86 percent from 1994 to 2004. And they rose again in 2005 and 2006.

In the same period that cable rates shot up:

- The average cell phone bill decreased 5.6 percent
- The average long-distance rate dropped 50 percent
- The price of a personal computer declined by 78 percent
- Even the price of electricity dropped 6 percent.

WHY COMPETITION ISN'T WIDESPREAD:

It seems so obvious that competition is good. Why then, isn't there competition in the cable industry? Why can't new providers just enter the video market to compete with cable monopolies?

- The current cable franchising system was designed before the Internet was conceived; before computers were standard equipment; before rotary dials on telephones were considered "quaint."
- If a cable provider wanted to serve customers nationwide, it would need to apply for 33,000 separate franchise agreements before it could provide service. In contrast, providers of telephone service currently need only one franchise agreement in each state in order to serve throughout that state's borders.
- Because each community may require different concessions from its cable provider, the negotiations can be long and expensive. The infrastructure necessary to provide cable service is expensive as well – these two factors alone are significant barriers to companies entering the market.



Cesar Monzon

Framingham, Massachusetts
Statistics Instructor

"High-speed Internet and video services are becoming more important in the classroom."

Educational programs are limited only by teachers' imaginations. They can include global cultures, politics, science, current events, advances in medicine and technology, as well as the arts, history and math. The amount of information available is greater than most of us can imagine, and it presents a treasure trove for research and analysis for students at every grade level.

It's an educational travesty that limited infrastructure is preventing so many of our students from benefiting from these educational opportunities.

Widespread access to reliable high-speed and interactive communications services, which broadband technology delivers, would open the world to children in every corner of America, offering visual and audio elements that bring textbooks to life.

If there were more service providers in the communications marketplace, I'm confident that some of them would offer schools video on-demand programs from groups like National Geographic, the Smithsonian and NOVA. These are wonderful programs most current cable television providers haven't marketed to schools, even though it is a logical product for them to offer. With high-speed video communications, our students could also produce their own news or community affairs programs; and broadcast musical and drama performances and sporting events.

I want to see competition in the cable television industry because the current structure hasn't provided American schools the communication tools needed to transform television and video services from mind-numbing entertainment boxes into the educational mediums they can be.

If there were more providers in the marketplace, I'm sure some of them would see the value in educational programming and services.



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Mark Garcia

Merced, California
Attorney

"Because of outdated regulations, America has lost its edge as a global Internet and overall technological leader."

As a result, broadband and wireless innovations stay out of the consumer market and my business can't enjoy the competitive edge these advanced services would bring. Media reports from across the country say that outdated cable franchise laws, specifically, have barred competitors from entering the market with superior fiber-optic networks that can offer better broadband, phone and video services.

As an attorney in rural California, I often have to travel long distances for short meetings with clients that I could easily accomplish with a teleconference instead. It disappoints me to learn that my counterparts in countries like Japan and South Korea already have the broadband technology that lets them teleconference and quickly send data files from small and home offices. American business people should have these same business tools like super fast broadband, interactive video and dynamic mobile-phone-based Internet technologies. Broadband speeds in Asian countries make even our fastest "high-speed" Internet seem slow and antiquated.

In my business, if my clients are dissatisfied with my service, they can choose another attorney to handle their case. The presence of competition serves as an incentive for me to do the absolute best for every client – Shouldn't every business have that incentive?



Rusty Hunt

Coulee City, Washington
Wheat Farmer/Cattle Rancher

"Cable companies don't give farms like mine a second thought when it comes to decisions about where to offer services."

And because our current cable franchise laws give cable companies a lock on the urban areas they serve, there is no incentive for service to ever come out to me or the homes that dot the countryside.

Advanced, high-speed communications services are vital to the economic success of American farmers. We need reliable, affordable communications, including video services, if we are to successfully compete in the global agricultural marketplace. Rural businesses have been left behind long enough.

I want our lawmakers to update the cable franchise structure because I see competition as my only opportunity to get the advanced communications services I need. I might live in rural America where there are more dusty roads than paved streets, but that doesn't mean I don't deserve access to the Information Superhighway. If companies were encouraged to compete to get me into the Digital Age, I bet I'd already be there.



Mario Alvarez

Natick, Massachusetts
Stockbroker

"Despite important gains throughout the decades, minorities in America too often find themselves at an economic, social and educational disadvantage."

In fact, the lack of access to high speed advanced communications services like broadband Internet is so common, it's been given a name: the Digital Divide. You don't have to be a minority to suffer from the Digital Divide, of course. We need to fill in this gap so that no American falls into it.

Anyone with affordable and reliable Internet access, especially those with high-speed connections at home, can easily keep up on current events, access a wealth of research material, quickly and easily interact with friends and family, and even build a successful home-based business. Those without broadband Internet are missing out in a big way – socially, educationally and economically.

The current regulatory structure also gives minorities no bargaining power to get the kinds of cultural programs and services we want. As a result, we either have a token amount of cultural programming in the affordable, basic package, or the programming we really want at costs we can't afford.

If there were more companies offering advanced communications services, maybe those new providers would care about the kind of programs and services minority customers want. Maybe that Digital Divide would narrow. For my money, it's worth a try.



Chris Tafoya

Merced, California
Businessman/Sports Fan

"Americans are known as a nation of sports enthusiasts."

We use sports to teach our children about teamwork, and we use sports analogies to illustrate everything from economics to true love. We write songs, plays and movies about our sports teams. Corporations use sports figures to sell their products. And for many of us, nothing can ruin a Sunday afternoon faster than when the cable goes out.

The cable companies have taken advantage of some of us, shifting our most sought after teams and channels to higher and higher cost tiers of service. In some parts of the country, for reasons I can't fathom, they refuse to broadcast games – even when their customers cry out for them.

It's about time someone did something about it. And I think the same spirit of competition that makes sports great is the answer for what makes the cable industry less-than-great. The more companies providing service, the better off consumers are.