

# **AREA NINE CABLE COUNCIL**

## **32,000 CABLEVISION SUBSCRIBERS RISK LOSING ACCESS TO**

### **PUBLIC, EDUCATION & GOVERNMENT CHANNELS**

#### **CABLE COUNCIL STEPS IN TO HELP**

September 26, 2008: Thirty-two thousand “basic” subscribers to Cablevision may lose access to three important community TV channels under a plan being pushed by the company. As part of Cablevision’s conversion from analog to digital transmission, the company plans to make local channels 77, 78 and 79 available only to those with digital “boxes” or new “digital-ready” TV sets.

The Cablevision plan would impact 13% of the firm’s quarter-million Connecticut subscribers, or approximately 32,000 households.

Originally the Cablevision plan was to take effect September 16<sup>th</sup>, but due to unresolved legal issues, Cablevision has agreed to postpone the move to “no later than” October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has also brought up concerns about the proposed action and has appealed to the state’s Department of Public Utility Control to open a contested docket on the matter, an action that the Area Nine Cable Council supports. ([AG Petition](#))

Cablevision has offered subscribers to its “Basic” and “Family” analog-only services a free digital converter, one per household, to allow viewers continued access to the community-based channels.

These subscribers should call Cablevision at (800) 353-9821 and select option 3 to request their free box and its installation.

This conversion by Cablevision is unrelated to the industry’s switch from analog to digital over the air TV transmission, effective February 17, 2009.

“The Cable Council believes that the local community PEG access channels were intended and should be available unrestricted on all TV sets on the broadest service tier offered by the cable provider. ” says ANCC Chairman Hal Levy of Westport. “We are also concerned that homes with more than one TV set will be given only one converter box, thereby leaving those customers without the ability to receive PEG channels on their other TV sets unless additional converter boxes are rented from Cablevision at \$6.50 per month for each set.”

Under FCC regulations and Connecticut law, all video and cable companies are required to carry community-based programming, often referred to a PEG (public – education – government) channels. Community channel 77 carries “public access” programming created by local producers. Channel 78 airs town-produced educational programming, often from local schools. Channel 79 airs government meetings, also produced locally in each town.

“In Fairfield County we are very concerned that residents and Cablevision subscribers will lose out on our programming”, says Carole Young-Kleinfeld, who works with Wilton’s Government Access Channel 79 and is one of the town’s representatives on the Area Nine Cable Council. “We’re doing all we can to inform our viewers of this change and are encouraging them to call Cablevision immediately to express their concerns”.

“Given its tremendous revenues and its use of public rights-of-ways to deliver its product, this is the least that a firm like Cablevision can do to serve the public interest,” says James Cameron of Darien’s Channel 79. “We have a staff of volunteers that works very hard to produce our programming and are very disappointed that Cablevision is doing something to make it less available in our community.”

Created by the DPUC, the Area Nine Cable Council is a watchdog group of concerned volunteers from ten communities, Darien, Easton, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Stamford, Weston, Westport & Wilton, fulfilling its mandate to be a liaison between cable subscribers and Cablevision and to support expanded public, educational, and governmental access programming.

For more info on the ANCC’s work, see [www.westportct.net/ancc](http://www.westportct.net/ancc)