Protecting Local Voices: The Case for Modern PEG Funding in California

What Is PEG?
Public, Education, and Government (PEG) Access Television was established by federal law in the 1970s to ensure that communities had a local platform for civic discourse, educational programming, and public access. These channels have long served as vital pillars of democracy, transparency, and media literacy. They offer an accessible platform for local government meetings, school events, arts, culture, and community voices that are often left out of commercial media.

Why It Still Matters
In an age of misinformation, media consolidation, and shrinking local news coverage, PEG access is more important than ever. TV stations have evolved into Community Media Centers that provide essential services including coverage of public meetings, media education for youth and seniors, and ensuring underserved populations can amplify their voices through meaningful storytelling. These services are especially critical in rural areas, multilingual neighborhoods, and historically marginalized communities throughout California.

The Funding Crisis
PEG stations have historically been funded through fees collected from cable television providers as part of local or statewide franchise agreements. However, as consumers cancel cable subscriptions and switch to streaming services like Netflix, YouTube, and Hulu, the amount of revenue from cable franchise fees has sharply declined.

This decline is not only hurting community media centers, it is also reducing general fund revenue for local governments. Cities and counties once relied on these franchise fees to help support public safety, infrastructure, and basic services. Under current law, those same local governments are unable to collect comparable fees from streaming platforms. As a result, communities lose twice. Community Media Centers are forced to reduce services or shut down and local governments lose out on vital funding.

The Legislative Opportunity
California can modernize PEG funding by following examples already under consideration in other states such as New York, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine. These proposals extend video programming fees to streaming services and satellite providers. This would ensure that companies delivering video content over broadband are contributing their fair share, just as cable companies once did.

A proposed **Community Media and Civic Information Investment Act** would do the following:

- Impose a 5 percent excise tax on revenue from streaming and satellite video providers
- Allocate the revenue as follows: 40 percent to municipalities, 40 percent to community media centers, and 20 percent to the State General Fund
- Create a fair and sustainable funding model for community media and local governments, regardless of the delivery method used

What We Need From You
We urge California legislators to introduce and support a bill that modernizes PEG funding for the digital age. Without action, dozens of local media centers will disappear, and cities and counties will continue to lose out on revenue that supports essential public services.

Local media matters. Local government matters.

Let’s work together to ensure they both remain strong.