



Congressman José E. Serrano

Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General
Government

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Opening Statement of Chairman José E. Serrano Hearing on Public, Educational, and Governmental Access to Cable Television September 17, 2008

I welcome you to this hearing of the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee. Today the subcommittee will hear testimony on the subject of public, educational, and governmental, or PEG, access to cable television. Our witnesses represent a broad range of knowledge and perspectives on this topic, so we look forward to a spirited and informative discussion.

By way of background, under Federal law, local entities may grant franchises to cable operators and may require the designation of PEG channels as part of these franchising agreements. These local franchising authorities may also require cable operators to provide services, facilities, or equipment in support of PEG broadcasting. The intent of this Federal law is to provide the opportunity for cable operators to give back to the community in exchange for being granted the valuable right to serve that community and to use public rights-of-way to deliver those services.

By granting this authority, Congress recognized that PEG programming is in the public interest and essential to our communities as an outlet for free speech, local information and opinions, and emergency communications. PEG supports our democratic ideals by helping to develop a well-informed and well-educated society. It benefits all of us to support and encourage PEG programming.

Unfortunately, it is not always easy for a PEG broadcaster to get on the air, and, at times, it is not easy for a viewer to view PEG programs. There appear to be many reasons for this. Technological and financial challenges for PEG broadcasters are often imposing, and new technical challenges are becoming apparent as we move toward 100 percent digital television.

Barriers to PEG programming may be related to whether or not cable operators continue to make PEG channels as accessible as they have been in the past. For

