

I Want My Cheap Cable TV

by Steven Pigeon

Rarely do I do what the television set tells me to do but I must admit that the recent television ads “No East Coast Gaming” and “TV 4 US” have gotten my attention. I did what the television instructed me to do and went to each of their respective websites.

Both campaigns essentially deal with the same topic of “monopoly”, the Potawatomi Tribe, through any means necessary, are trying to preserve theirs while TV 4 US is trying to break up the monopoly that cable companies currently have.

Last month, the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute’s Christian Schneider released a report outlining the benefits of cable TV deregulation for Wisconsin consumers. The report estimated that Wisconsin consumers would experience annual savings of between \$82.80 and \$149.01, improved customer service, and most importantly the decreased likelihood that people will be unable to watch Green Bay Packer games that air on the NFL network.¹

Opponents of deregulation suggest that various consumer protections would be diminished and public access stations would become a thing of the past. Though these are valid concerns, consumers are fully capable of negotiating their rights with cable companies, and with competition consumers will have a new tool in their arsenal, the ability to go to a competing firm. Furthermore if there is truly a demand for public access broadcasting cable companies will make sure that it is included in their product offering.

In the Wisconsin State Legislature the Video Competition Act is currently making its way to Governor Doyle’s desk. What I believe the debate has been missing is discussion about the possible expansion of the Wisconsin cable market. Namely, those consumers like me, who have the ability to purchase cable and various bundled offers but currently are not willing to do so.

While talking with Time Warner Cable I learned it would cost me approximately \$1200 a year for high speed internet and cable service. This equates to approximately a month and half of rent. It would also require me to leave work early to chaperone the Time Warner employee who will be installing the cable, and who would arrive at a time of their choosing.

Combine what I perceive to be a high price, with the inconvenience of the actual purchase of the cable, has led me to instead, use personal time at work for my internet needs, and to engross myself in what network and public TV have to offer. My biggest regret is the inability to regularly watch Brewer games, but Bob Uecker is able to scratch that itch for me.

¹ Schneider, Christian; *The Benefit of Cable Competition in Wisconsin*, March 22, 2007

If cable deregulation is allowed to occur, cable companies will have to compete for consumers like me through cheaper rates, and better customer service, in order to maintain or grow their customer base and revenue. Instead of receiving the weekly flyer with a price offer that never changes, consumers will be able to compare prices and services across several companies.

I encourage Governor Doyle to sign the Video Competition Act and allow consumers to have their cheap cable TV.