

October 15, 2019

Ms. Carolyn McIntyre
President
California Cable and Telecommunications Association
1001 K Street, 2nd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **The California Channel**

Dear Ms. McIntyre:

As citizens and leaders in California, we are disturbed by the decision of the cable television industry to pull the plug on the California Channel, the main venue for telecasting state legislative proceedings of the largest state and sixth largest economy of the world.

We have appreciated the cable industry's contribution to fund the operations of the California Channel and allocate the space on all cable systems up and down the state—but are now deeply concerned that this gift to the public will now be privatized on October 16th, to potentially be used for infomercials, shopping networks, or other programming. It's like building an office tower on a previously donated public park.

The California Channel was an important but modest public service in return for the use of the public rights of way that the cable industry depends on, but we have learned the staff of the California Channel is being laid off and the equipment sold. We urge the cable industry to continue to reserve the channel for telecasting state legislative proceedings on the basic tier of its systems. While a more permanent solution is found, the channel can and should telecast the direct feed of the California Assembly and Senate floor sessions and hearings.

Surely, the deliberations of elected leaders developing policy for 40 million Californians is worth the attention of at least one if not a few channels amidst the hundreds on our basic cable systems. While the California Legislature does record and put online video recordings of its proceedings, there are issues of access given the digital divide due to broadband penetration and technological literacy. Searching for the video archive of a specific hearing on a legislative website is useful, but not at all the same as channels, available on the basic tier of a cable system, that California residents can flip on and discover a discussion on a policy topic that they were not previously aware was being debated.

There is no evidence that viewership is down for the California Channel, C-SPAN or the over 20 states that have legislative channels—in fact, every indication is that involvement and interest in politics is up, at the national, state and local level. In our times, we need more democracy and transparency for our state legislature, not less.

We urge California's cable industry to continue its public service obligation of devoting at least one channel to show the proceedings of our state Legislature, a low-cost alternative with a high benefit for transparency, citizen engagement, and our democratic values.

Sincerely,

Over 250 individual California signatories (attached), and the following organizations:

ACLU of California	(Contact: Kevin Baker)
Asian Law Alliance	(Contact: Richard Konda)
Building the California Dream Alliance	(Contact: Mary Gutierrez)
California Clean Money Campaign	(Contact: Trent Lange)
California Reinvestment Coalition	(Contact: Vijay Das)
CalNonprofits	(Contact: Jennifer Fearing)
CalPIRG	(Contact: Emily Rusch)
Center for Employment Opportunities	(Contact: Alicia Lewis)
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety	(Contact: Rosemary Shahan)
GRACE	(Contact: Jackie Wong)
Indivisible California: StateStrong	(Contact: Dennessa Atilas)
Friends Committee on Legislation	(Contact: Jim Lindberg)
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California	(Contact: Jeffrey Reynoso)
League of Women Voters of California	(Contact: Carol Moon Goldberg)
Parent Voices	(Contact: Mary Ignatius)
SEIU California	(Contact: Alma Hernandez)
Stronger California Advocates Network	(Contact: Jessica Stender)
Voices for Progress	(Contact: Evan Minton)

Senator Liz Figueroa (retired)

Assembly Speaker pro Tem Sally Lieber (retired)

Anthony Wright, Health Access California*

*organization listed for identification purposes

cc:

Governor Gavin Newsom

Senate President pro Tem Toni Atkins

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon

Assembly Speaker pro Tem Kevin Mullin