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Alliance for Community Media - 2007 International Conference & Exhibition
Thursday July 26, 2007

Opening ceremony and welcome. The opening ceremony was led by Board Chair Mike Wassenaar who said that “history is a river, with a calm above and turbulence below, with bends we can’t see and falls and rapids await.”

Plenary Session Speakers: Gloria Tristani, Spiegel & McDiarmid, Barb Popovic, Executive Director, Chicago Access Corporation, Chicago, IL. Hannah Sassaman Prometheus Radio

Attorney, Jim Horwood introduced Gloria Tristini, who had served as FC Commissioner. This isn’t the first time she has addressed our national conference, the first time was in June 2001.

Public interest means serving the Public. Key issues she sees coming in the near future.

-FCC Auction of 700 MHZ spectrum in January 2008.

-Media ownership and concentration, FCC rulings are on-going.

-Upcoming release of Ken Burns documentary on war in Sept on PBS. The program examines WWII from the family point of view. However, controversy has arose because the program is not inclusive enough of all the Americans who fought in the war. For many reasons the stories of Hispanic/Latinos was left out, as well as the native American Indians whose work using the Navaho language created a secret code that was never broken by the Germans. The PBS response to the controversy has led to the creation of two additional half hour segments featuring the story of the Bataan War March and the story of the contribution of the Navaho Indians.

The meaning we have to consider is that “who produces” chooses, the message and the story that is told.

Barb Popovic Chicago Access Corporation

Barb talked about how the people in Illinois organized and made a major difference in the Telco bill that was passed by unanimous vote by the Illinois state legislature. Recently (Saturday, June 30, 2007) Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich approved SB 678, signing the telecommunications bill into law.

In brief, in face of the onslaught from AT&T, and the expenditures of huge sums to support the legislation, which included the hiring of more lobbyists than there are legislators in the state of Illinois. The opponents organized and created a “Keep Us Connected” people’s movement and successfully brought attention to the damage that this Telco driven bill would create in their state, if passed as written. This resulted in many Illinois cities becoming active in the legislative battle. This includes Naperville who, among other actions, placed cardboard mock-up examples of the huge telecom node boxes that would be placed throughout their city.

With the assistance of the Attorney General's office, the citizen movement helped to rewrite the Telco written version of the Bill and replaced it with one designed to serve the needs of Illinois and its citizens, in addition to de-regulating the franchising process

Hannah Sassaman, Prometheus Radio

Hannah and Prometheus Radio has been dedicated to working to open the radio communication spectrum, whether Low or Full power, to serve the public interest. She reminded the audience of the former FCC chair who said he never had been visited by the "Angels of the Public Interest" she was part of the group who put their "wings" on and paid him a visit.

The Prometheus Radio group has been very active and has often worked with access proponents to represent the public interest at all levels. She spoke of the need to continue this collaborative effort and for PEG supporters to engage with media activists in solidarity to ensure citizens rights are not steamrolled in favor of private commercial interests.

Web sites of interest:

<http://www.spiegelmc.com/>

<http://www.cantv.org/>

<http://www.cantv.org/Alliance2007Workshop.htm>

<http://www.prometheusradio.org/>