



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Cable Television Lineup Change is a Public Safety Concern

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR July 19, 2016

| ISSUE: **TELECOMMUNICATIONS, FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

**ONEONTA, 07/19/16 --** State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) is calling on Time Warner Cable/Charter Communications and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to review a recent decision to remove WBNG-TV from the Otsego County cable television lineup.

**“Many families and individuals depend on local television news and programming and the loss of WBNG is a public safety concern as well as a quality of life issue,”** said Senator Seward. **“A number of constituents, particularly those who live in the southern portion of Otsego County, have contacted me with their concerns over this channel change. I am hopeful that switch will be reconsidered.”**

Time Warner Cable/Charter Communications recently dropped Binghamton-based WBNG-TV from the Otsego County cable lineup and replaced it with Utica-based WKTV's new CBS signal. Now Otsego County viewers receive two WKTV channels, one an NBC affiliate and the other a CBS affiliate, broadcasting identical local news, weather, and sports.

In letters to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and Charter Communications Senior Executive Vice President David Ellen, Senator Seward writes:

*“While Otsego County may be considered as part of the Utica television market, much of the county is closer to Binghamton and shares many of the same concerns with that region. It seems to me that WBNG, which has been broadcast in the region since 1954, should continue to be available to viewers in Otsego*

County.

*“This appeal is in no way a criticism of WKTV. I have written letters in support of the Utica-based station in the past, and respect their local news coverage. However, by dropping WBNG from the Otsego County cable television lineup Time Warner Cable is limiting choice, and showing disregard for area subscribers.”*

**“I realize there are various reasons for this decision and that certain ‘must carry’ guidelines are in place. However, there are instances when commonsense should trump bureaucratic policies - identical local news broadcasts on two stations makes no sense, especially when another option exists. I do believe the FCC and Time Warner Cable/Charter Communications can work together in this instance to enact a reasonable plan that takes the needs of the viewers into account,”**  
concluded Seward.

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The full text of letters to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Time Warner Cable/Charter Communications are below.

July 15, 2016

Mr. Tom Wheeler, Chairman

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As the state senator representing Otsego County, New York I have received a number of complaints following Time Warner Cable's recent decision to remove CBS affiliate WBNG and replace it with WKTV. While I realize there are various reasons for the action, I am formally requesting that you review this matter and implore Time Warner Cable to reconsider the decision and reinstate WBNG.

Many families and individuals depend on local television news and programming and the loss of WBNG is a public safety concern as well as a quality of life issue. Before the decision was made to drop WBNG in favor of WKTV's new CBS station, viewers were already able to access local programming from WKTV via their NBC station. Now viewers are left with two WKTV channels broadcasting identical local news, weather, and sports – a real step backward in a day and age when more choices should be available.

Otsego County is situated in a unique geographic region. While Otsego County may be considered as part of the Utica television market, much of the county is closer to Binghamton and shares many of the same concerns with that region. It seems to me that WBNG, which has been broadcast in the region since 1954, should continue to be available to viewers in Otsego County.

This appeal is in no way a criticism of WKTV. I have written letters in support of the Utica-based station in the past, and respect their local news coverage. However, by dropping WBNG from the Otsego County cable television lineup Time Warner Cable is limiting choice, and showing disregard for area subscribers.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should there be any role I can play as a state legislator to assist you in better understanding the local dynamics at play.

Sincerely yours,

**JAMES L. SEWARD**

State Senator

Mr. David Ellen

Senior Executive Vice President

Programming, Policy and Corporate Functions

Charter Communications

400 Atlantic Street

Stamford, CT 06901

Dear Mr. Ellen:

Time Warner Cable's recent decision to remove WBNG-TV from the Otsego County cable lineup has resulted in a number of complaints to my office. While I realize there are various reasons for the action, I am formally requesting that you reconsider the decision and reinstate WBNG.

Many families and individuals depend on local television news and programming and the loss of WBNG is a public safety concern as well as a quality of life issue. Before the decision was made to drop WBNG in favor of WKTV's new CBS station, viewers were already able to access local programming from WKTV via their NBC station. Now viewers are left with two WKTV channels broadcasting identical local news, weather, and sports – a real step backward in a day and age when more choices should be available.

Otsego County is situated in a unique geographic region. While Time Warner Cable may consider Otsego County to be part of the Utica television market, much of the county is closer to Binghamton and shares many of the same concerns with that region. It seems to me that WBNG, which has been broadcast in the region since 1954, should continue to be available to your viewers in Otsego County.

This appeal is in no way a criticism of WKTV. I have written letters in support of the Utica-based station in the past, and respect their local news coverage. However, by dropping WBNG from the Otsego County cable television lineup Time Warner Cable is limiting choice, and showing disregard for area subscribers.

I am certain that by this time, you have been contacted by a number of displeased viewers, and I trust their thoughts and concerns, along with mine, will be given full consideration.

Sincerely yours,

**JAMES L. SEWARD**

State Senator