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**Statement by Stacey Briggs, Executive Director, Tennessee Cable  
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NASHVILLE – Tennessee today has a wide-open door for companies to apply and gain franchises with local governments to provide video services. AT&T has chosen not to apply because it simply does not like the expense of those rules – a common-sense set of rules that exist to protect consumers, local governments and taxpayers.

The bill introduced today would provide AT&T a shortcut that will short-change consumers, strip authority from local governments and establish a system of discrimination about who will and will not have access to service and competition. This is why the state’s local governments – who would love to have the competition for their residents – oppose this legislation.

State legislators, local elected officials and taxpayers must all ask the question why AT&T will not play by existing rules that invite companies to compete but require a commitment by those companies to ensure quality service and access to all residents in a community. The so-called “barrier” to entry for the company is a myth; it can do so today, and the FCC just recently affirmed a 90-day approval process for cities. The company complains the process is too complex, yet how would it know? It has never applied for a franchise in Tennessee.

TCTA-member companies have invested more than \$1 billion since 1996 playing by the existing rules to construct networks across all urban and rural markets in Tennessee. It’s exactly the expense of build out that AT&T wants to dodge.

If AT&T has its way, the company has no requirements to make service available to all and can cherry pick high-end consumers while avoiding low-income and rural areas altogether. In Nashville, this will mean Belle Meade gets service, but not Bordeaux; in Memphis, Germantown but not Frayser; in Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain but not Alton Park.

The door is wide open – today as it has been for the past 10 years – for AT&T to compete. TCTA encourages lawmakers to require the company to play by the rules that exist to protect consumers and local governments and ensure quality service to all Tennesseans.

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