

## Theresa Utton-Jerman

---

**Subject:** FW: Support of H. 744

**From:** Bram Towbin  
**Subject:** Support of H. 744

Ms. Utton-Jerman and Ms. Buck,

If you could pass the following along to the legislators who were at last night's meeting in Barre.

I meant to speak last night at the Downstreet public meeting but I was called away. Ironically I had to appear at our local Selectboard to advocate for the same cause - the importance of public access television. I want you to support H. 744 and specifically allocate \$100,000 from the General Fund for a study to facilitate funding of public access.

We live in an age where meanness and aggression dominate the news cycle. The quiet voices of those who do the real work of caring for our community go unheard. It is difficult for the general public to know about Fred Wilber delivering meals to elderly people who haven't spoken with anyone since his last visit the day before. Not many people appreciate the work of Capstone, Down Street and the myriad of other organizations that take care of those our times have forgotten. Without the public knowing their stories, the financial support for those who advocate for them vanishes. CVTV is the conduit for community. They were there last night proudly recording the deeds of our unsung heroes - those who help small farms survive, those who make sure children are cared for, those who help elderly do their taxes, those who safeguard the history of women's suffrage.... As my grandmother, a 5 decade long public school teacher who was born before women had the vote said, "you cannot teach anyone who isn't paying attention." That is CVTV's role - to teach - to get people to pay attention. In our current milieu, where people are overburdened both emotionally and financially, it is difficult to fight against the dazzle of distraction. CVTV stands firm. We tell our story. In the end we know, without self-knowledge we cannot be any good to others. But we need help.

Back in the day public access was deemed a universal good. Helping the community tell its own story was seen as vital to the public interest. The stalwart conservative Barry Goldwater championed Federal legislation that gave birth to local interests having a space on the cable spectrum. Today that small sliver of communal assault is under threat from greedy interests and a disinterested public. The minuscule funding from subscribers is dwindling as other technological advances make basic cable service obsolete. There are a number of things in addition to H. 744 that will safeguard the future of the small, but vital, voice of local people. You might consider state funding and archiving of town Selectboard Meetings as a replacement for the difficult to access written notes. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Please support local public access. In this vein I am happy to report that my local Selectboard is back-tracking on canceling video coverage of their meetings. There had been a groundswell of objection. Luckily the town has CVTV. But it brings to mind a Joni Mitchell song, "Don't it always seem to go, you don't know what you've got till it's gone. " Imagine if you had the hearing last night and no one was there to record it.

Bram Towbin  
Board Member CVTV