

# FAMILY FINANCES

## TV Reception For Less May Soon Be A Reality

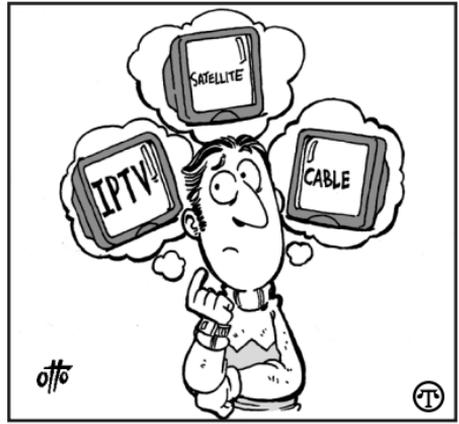
(NAPSA)—With cable rates rising dramatically, a less expensive way to deliver TV service is earning a favorable rating from viewers. Yet despite the existing technology, many consumers may not be able to tune in—and save—for a long time.

The phone companies have developed technology capable of delivering video service over high-speed fiber-optic lines, the same lines that deliver high-speed Internet access. Unfortunately, cable companies currently have a lock on television service and are doing everything in their power to thwart competition.

“The cable companies have enjoyed a monopoly in video service for decades and most homeowners are forced to endure the ever-increasing cost of cable without other options open to them,” said Bruce Hahn, president of the American Homeowners Grassroots Alliance. “According to a report by the Federal Communications Commission, cable rates have increased 86 percent since 1995. Consumers will win if they have another alternative for television service.”

Unfortunately, cable companies are insisting that the telephone companies who are ready to deploy this service negotiate franchise agreements with each of the 30,000 different U.S. municipalities—one at a time—to offer this service. This stalling effort could take decades to complete. Many of the negotiations would likely fail, leaving customers stuck with the same cable monopoly.

“These archaic rules were devel-



**New technologies such as IPTV will offer consumers greater choice and lower entertainment bills.**

oped decades ago to deal with the technology of another time—to manage the cable monopoly,” said Hahn.

Texas has signed legislation reforming the state’s franchising rules. Under the new system, the phone companies would only have to apply for one franchising license. Other states are considering similar measures. On a national level, Senator John Ensign (R-NV) recently introduced legislation updating the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Among other things it would create a national Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) franchise mechanism and bring more choice to homeowners.

The Alliance supports all roads leading to more consumer choice for TV services. Whether the road leads through municipal officials, state legislatures or Congress, any road that saves consumers money on consumer services is a good one.

You can write or call your legislator to let them know how you feel about this or other issues.