



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Sen. Hansen and Rep. Rhoades to Introduce “Fair Access to Networks” (FAN) Legislation

Legislation will establish arbitration process to resolve dispute between cable companies and sports networks

Madison – Focused on finding a solution to the current dispute between cable companies and independent sports networks, like the NFL Network and the Big Ten network, State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) and State Representative Kitty Rhoades (Hudson) announced their intention to introduce their “Fair Access to Networks” (FAN) legislation.

Specifically, the FAN legislation will establish a dispute resolution system to allow an independent arbiter to select between the competing proposals for carriage.

“There is no reason that all Wisconsin fans should not be able to see the Wisconsin-Ohio State game or the Packers-Cowboys game in November. While the cable companies and the sports networks continue their dispute, Wisconsin’s sports fans continue to lose,” said Hansen. “By setting up a fair and neutral arbitration system, we can put an end to this fight and give consumers access to the networks they want.”

Nationwide, cable companies have been unable to reach a solution that will allow their subscribers access to popular sports programming. While satellite and other television providers have added the NFL Network and Big Ten network to their standard package without a rate increase, cable companies have contested that cable subscribers should be made to pay additional charges to view games carried on these networks.

“Millions of sports fans in Wisconsin are on the short end of a fight they didn’t ask for, and no one is in their corner,” said Rhoades. “We’re not picking sides between the cable companies and the sports networks. We are simply establishing a fair way to end these disputes so that our constituents are no longer shut out of programming they should have access to.”

As it currently stands, cable-subscribing football fans living outside the Green Bay and Milwaukee media markets will not be able to watch the Packers play the Dallas Cowboys on November 29th unless of course they subscribe to AT&T, DirecTV, Dish Network or a similar provider that has reached agreements with the NFL Network. That

key game between the NFC's two best teams, along with football 24.7 programming 365 days a year, is being shown on NFL Network. The same is true for fans that will not be able to see the Badgers play Ohio State this weekend, as well as a number of this season's men's and women's basketball games, unless an agreement is reached.

"Love of the Packers and Badgers is a common bond that unites our diverse state and brings families and friends together," said Hansen. "I wish this legislation wasn't needed, but it is time for the fans to have a voice in this dispute."

Hansen and Rhoades will soon be circulating the FAN Act in their respective houses for co-sponsorship.

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