

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2007

Contact: Rev. James L. Demus III

773-619-9248

MINISTERS URGE LEGISLATORS TO END THE ERA OF CABLE RATE HIKES ON WISCONSIN CONSUMERS!

Madison, Wisconsin –The Co-Directors of the Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide (MAADD), and other prominent Wisconsin ministers from across the state gathered today at the Wisconsin State Capitol and burned cable bills to protest annual cable rate hikes imposed on consumers. The ministers called upon Wisconsin legislators to bring video competition to Wisconsin consumers by promptly passing Senate Bill 107 / Assembly Bill 207, the Wisconsin Video Competition Act.

“Consumers are just fed up with cable rates gone wild. In Madison alone, cable rates have risen more than 55% in the last 10 years. It is time for our legislators to act on behalf of consumers as legislators have already done in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Missouri and pass Senate Bill 107/Assembly Bill 207 - legislation that would allow new providers to efficiently enter the local video market and provide alternatives to traditional cable television service,” said Reverend Thomas Flint, Founding Member of the Wisconsin Chapter of MAADD and pastor of St. Paul AME Church in Madison, Wisconsin.

The ministers asked Wisconsin elected leaders not to be hoodwinked by naysayers and alarmists who are only protecting the status quo of today’s cable environment – an environment where prices continue to rise, quality continues to decline and service continues to plummet. Instead, they urged leaders to focus on the real rewards that consumers are seeing in other states.

“Last year the legislative leaders in Michigan came together and passed a bill that is now reaping benefits for the people of the state of Michigan, including Detroit and its suburbs – and that’s just the beginning,” said Reverend Walter B. Johnson, Jr., Co-Director of MAADD. “There’s no reason Wisconsin consumers shouldn’t reap the benefits of competition, too, instead of being forced to keep paying and paying and paying.”

A recent study conducted by the Phoenix Center For Advanced Legal and Economic Policy concluded that Wisconsin consumers could save over four hundred thousand dollars a day if there was a real choice of cable providers in the state.

“Representatives from MAADD have testified in favor of video reform legislation across the country and have worked with local ministers, government leaders and other key stakeholders to support common sense legislation that will bring state-of-the-art broadband networks, savings and choice to consumers – especially minority consumers. If passed, Senate Bill 107/Assembly Bill 207 will be the vehicle to also make that happen in Wisconsin,” said Reverend James L. Demus III Founder and Co-Director of MAADD.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, minority consumers actually spend more money on communications services than Caucasians, making minorities disproportionately bear the brunt for regular cable price hikes. Minorities stand to benefit from real competition.

“Real life is proving that new entrants value minority communities,” said Reverend Watkins. “In states that have passed similar video franchising laws to Senate Bill 107/Assembly Bill 207, new video providers are entering minority markets and consumers across the state are singing the praises of lower prices.”

In Michigan, for example, Detroit was one of the first markets to experience the benefits of competition – a community where over 80% of the population is African American and the median annual household income is below \$30,000.

“It is time to get this bill done and get it done in a way that allows competition to thrive, communities to prosper and consumers to win,” said Reverend Joseph Reynolds, Founding Member of the Wisconsin Chapter of MAADD and pastor of Bradford Memorial AME Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

###

The Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide is an 15,000+ member civil rights organization led by ministers devoted to bridging the digital divide between those who have ready access to technology and those who do not.