



## Hamptons TV Wants Wider Viewing

By Linda Haugsted

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Another television outlet wants New York state lawmakers to help get its programming delivered to more Cablevision Systems Corp. customers.

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This time it isn't the Yankees Entertainment & Sports Network, which has an interim agreement making New York Yankees games available to that MSO's subscribers.

This time out, WVVH — a UHF station also known as Hamptons TV — is swinging for the fences in the state capital of Albany. It wants legislators to help it gain more Cablevision homes for its polo coverage and *Howdy Doody* reruns.

Station owner Ernie Schimizzi convinced supporters in the Senate and Assembly to sponsor parallel bills directing "any cable television company providing cable service in the county of Suffolk [to] make channel WVVH-TV available to all subscribers."

The Assembly version is sponsored by Assemblyman Fred Thiele (R-Sag Harbor), with other co-sponsors.

### A long-time ally

Thiele goes way back with the television station: Schimizzi said the assemblyman cut the ribbon when the then-low power station launched in 1994.

Cablevision already carries the station — which broadcasts over Channel 50 — within its over-the-air footprint.

Schimizzi said his station never sought must-carry status, but has negotiated retransmission consent with Cablevision. The operator does not pay to carry the channel.

Now, Hamptons TV wants carriage throughout Suffolk County, a request the cable operator has rebuffed.

"According to customer surveys, WVVH is not highly coveted," Cablevision spokesman Bill Powers said. "According to federal law, Cablevision is not required to carry WVVH beyond its broadcast reach."

### Polo in demand?

The station does have supporters, such as the Suffolk County Legislature and the towns of Riverhead, Babylon, Southampton and East Hampton, as each passed resolutions pledging their support.

Those apparent fans believe there's a wider audience for WVVH's mix of local news, sports programming (including coverage of Bridgehampton Polo events) and such kids fare as *The*

*Cheap Show and Howdy Doody.*

A similar Thiele-backed bill died in committee last session. Current versions are pending in various committees.

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