



December 1, 2021

Dear [Councilperson's name]:

We wish to bring to the attention of City Council that for the first time in 18 years, Denver 8 TV did not budget money for the production of candidate and ballot issues forums for Denver voters.

Since 2003, when John Hickenlooper first ran for mayor of Denver, the League of Women Voters of Denver and the Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation, both non-partisan groups committed to the education of voters, have collaborated with Denver 8 TV to present candidate and ballot issue forums. In every election cycle since 2003, our groups have worked with Denver 8 TV to present in-person and televised forums, including school board elections, even when these were held at a different time of year. These forums have provided a unique opportunity for voters to see and hear candidates respond to questions posed by impartial presenters, and to attend in person or to watch at a variety of times.

Historically, our two organizations have sponsored these forums with full cooperation from Denver 8 TV. Their leadership was strongly in favor of fulfilling their mission of government access and public education. However, in more recent years, this cooperation has been less reliable. In spite of our working in good faith to institute many cost-saving measures to accommodate Denver 8's budget, we now find that Denver 8 has pulled back its support, which has led to our inability to present candidate forums for the current school board election and the possible cutting back on the depth of presentations on ballot issues.

Given the current political climate; the attempts, many successful, to politicize school boards; and the proliferation of deliberate misinformation, this is especially regrettable. It is too late to change this decision, but we are appealing to you to assure that this will not happen again. We are initiating this conversation with the City Council now to ensure that Denver 8's budget includes adequate funding for the production and telecast of municipal election forums for 2022 and, to the extent that it is possible, for future municipal elections as well.

The best path forward seems to be using the PEG income as it was intended. Since the first cable franchise was granted in Denver in the mid-1970's, cable subscribers have paid this fee, which is money set aside for Public, Education and Government access. This money is meant to be used for voter education and oversight and is key to the purpose of Denver 8 TV.

You may have other ideas as to how the League of Women Voters of Denver and the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation can work with you and Denver 8 to ensure this programming. As Denver grows in size and complexity, we must provide accurate information and vehicles for community education and dialogue. We look forward to working with you in these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Nancy Ulrich'.

Nancy Ulrich
LWVD
Voter Service Candidate Video Coordinator

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Loretta Koehler'.

Loretta Koehler
President
Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation

Anne Duncan and Jeanette Scotland, LWVD Voter Service Co-Chairs