

Catholic League Assists EWTN

On March 2, the Catholic League received a call from a resident of Old Bridge, New Jersey concerning ACLU threats to eliminate EWTN service to the town on a legal technicality. The original situation was such that, because the town had two local access channels, there was not a channel open for the cable station to use for broadcasting EWTN. After over-whelming community protest and petitioning, the cable company and the Township of Old Bridge arranged to share the secondary local access channel under the agreement of Ordinance 29-04. This allowed Old Bridge citizens to see important community events and also to receive EWTN during mutually decided hours.

The contract concerning the time-sharing arrangement was content neutral; that is, the time leased by the cable company from the Township on its local access channel was not formally designated for religious programming by the Township. It was due to widespread consensus of the community that TKR Cable Company used that time to broadcast EWTN.

This agreement worked out very well for about seven months. Then, in early March, the ACLU wrote a ponderous letter to the Mayor and Council of Old Bridge, saying that it had received "complaints" concerning the use of the secondary public access channel to broadcast religious programming. The letter did not offer any evidence to show the arrangement unconstitutional, but merely hinted at it, calling it "troubling."

The Council was set to review and possibly reverse the decision to permit TKR to broadcast EWTN in Old Bridge. Community leaders, who had fought through the first six months of 1994 to get EWTN on the air, were becoming desperate. They called the Catholic League on March 2 and explained the situation.

On March 3, Dr. William Donohue, President of the League, sent

a letter to the Mayor and Council of Old Bridge, explaining that while the government could not sponsor religion, it did have a constitutional duty to accommodate it.

A few weeks later, the Catholic League received word that the Council had given notice that the ordinance was no longer under review, and had been deemed satisfactory as it stood.