

Bill would fire ETV board

Upset that ETV plans to air a film depicting run-down conditions in some rural schools, state Rep. John Graham Altman, R-Charleston, has filed a bill that would fire the public television network's seven-member board.

State-owned ETV plans to air "Corridor of Shame" on May 22 and May 29. ETV officials said Thursday they will broadcast the film despite Altman's criticism and bill.

Altman said the 58-minute film shows only one side of a complicated lawsuit, now awaiting a judge's decision.

The suit, filed by some of the state's poorest school districts, seeks to force the General Assembly to spend more on poor, rural schools. Lawyers for the poor districts gave filmmakers information to help them make

financial contributors to the film include ETV's chairman, Robert Rainey.

House Speaker David Wilkins, R-Greenville, said he could not predict if Altman's bill would pass. But Wilkins said he would not vote for it.

"ETV was never viewed as a propaganda arm," said Altman, 70, who as predecessor to then-Gov. Fritz Hollings, from 1959-1963, saw ETV's formative years.

At that time, Altman said, ETV was thought of as an educational vehicle to broadcast classes taught by good teachers to schools around the state. Over the years, ETV's mission has expanded to airing all kinds of shows — from Ken Burns' Civil War documentaries to the late band leader Lawrence Welk's music, both of which Altman



**John
Monk**

News
columnist

jmonk
@thestate.com
(803) 771-8344

CLASH OF VIEWS

The contro-
versy over

the first at ETV
over program-
ming.

In 1995, the
network was

documentary
on a Honea
Path textile
strike in the
1930s that
ended in vio-
lence. Three
years later,
ETV broadcast
the film.

This year, De-
mocrats criti-
cized ETV for
giving regular
programs to
the Legisla-
ture's GOP
leaders.

MONK

FROM PAGE A1

said he enjoys.

But "Corridor of Shame" and a gay-themed film, aired late last year, should not be broadcast because they are "advocacy" films meant to pressure lawmakers, Altman said. "You don't use ETV to lobby the General Assembly."

ETV president Moss Bresnahan said Thursday ETV will present a half-hour panel discussion after "Corridor of Shame," which he called a "point-of-view documentary." Both sides of the rural school funding issue will be discussed in the 90-minute package, he said.

"I don't think it's any more of an advocacy piece than other programs we do," said Bresnahan, comparing it to a film that ETV will broadcast on the state's Teacher of the Year nominees. "Both are valuable and important programs contributing to the overall discussion of the future of education in our state."

"Both (TV broadcasts) are valuable and important programs contributing to the overall discussion of the future of education in our state."

MOSS BRESNAHAN,
ETV president

"Corridor of Shame," which has received media attention, shows what some rural teachers and administrators think of the "daily realities" in their schools, he said. "We look forward to giving our viewers the opportunity to see it for themselves."

ETV chairman Rainey said the network should show "Corridor of Shame."

"It's really not a political film. It's got bipartisan support," he said, adding Republicans and

Democrats appear in the film, expressing concerns about rural public schools.

Rainey also warned that if Altman's bill is adopted, ETV's programming would be controlled "by the majority party in the Legislature."

Currently, the governor appoints the seven-member ETV board. Under Altman's bill, the governor still would appoint ETV board members, but each would have to be approved by the General Assembly.

Rainey is the brother of John Rainey, the Columbia philanthropist and political activist who got dozens of people to contribute more than \$75,000 to make "Corridor of Shame."

Altman may have a legitimate point, but his proposed remedy — firing all seven directors — may go too far, said Speaker Wilkins.

However, Altman said by showing "Corridor of Shame," ETV is "thumping its nose" at the state's priorities.

"I just hate to see ETV get in-

olved in all this," Altman said. "When it airs these advocacy shows, it places its stamp of approval on them."

Bresnahan said the show doesn't "point a finger at anybody other than it points a finger at some of those problems that exist in those school districts and leaves it up to the viewer to decide what should happen next."

Bud Ferillo, the Columbia publicist who produced "Corridor of Shame," defended the film.

"Many children and teachers ... are functioning in facilities that are flatly unsafe," said Ferillo, referring to the rural school districts, some of which the film portrays as too poor to fix their own problems. "I have presented irrefutable facts that should alarm and awaken all decent-minded South Carolinians."

Altman said it is the responsibility of local school boards — not the state — to upgrade schools. "If you want better conditions in your schools, you are going to have to raise property taxes."