

Comments from:

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Good morning. My name is Paul Giguere, and I am the President of the National Association of Public Affairs Networks, as well as President and CEO of CT-N, the Connecticut Network. For fifteen years, I have devoted my professional life to developing noncommercial, nonpartisan public affairs programming in my home state of Connecticut and across the country, and it is my privilege to be here today.

At its most fundamental level, we live in a democratic society whereby the rules we all agree to live by are crafted by us, the citizenry. We choose from our neighbors the people we believe will act in our best interest to develop, implement and enforce those rules. But in order for this system to work effectively, we all need a reliable non-partisan and non-politicized way to monitor, understand and interact with the government we elect. That's what is missing today.

As the FCC report clearly outlines, we are experiencing a crisis in state house reporting. Capitol press rooms have emptied out and many of the sources that have stepped in to fill the void have blurred the lines between reliable news and partisan opinion. This is the area that my colleagues and I have worked to address.

Against considerable odds, non-profits in several states have established independent, non-partisan state public affairs networks or SPANs, which provide C-SPAN-style coverage of all three branches of state government. House and Senate sessions, hearings and meetings of the executive and legislative branches, Supreme Court oral arguments, press conferences, election coverage, forums and other public policy events happening all around the state are part of the daily life of a SPAN. And when state government is faced with a crisis, the networks go into overdrive. For example, with their 70 camera positions around the capitol campus, Wisconsin Eye provided more than 300 hours of coverage of the political upheaval in Madison this Spring, including gavel-to-gavel coverage of the historic 69-hour legislative floor session and mass demonstrations inside and outside the Capitol. During a political crisis in Connecticut several years ago when a Governor was forced to resign, it was the Connecticut Network that chronicled every step of the process, from the intense hearings of the Committee of Inquiry, to constitutional questions before the State Supreme Court to the final resignation announcement at the Governor's residence.

But it is the everyday monitoring function of these networks which is critical, with most providing more than 2000 hours of primary source coverage per year. Networks like Gavel-to-Gavel Alaska supplies a vital daily link when distances separate many citizens from their state capitol. This summer, the Florida Channel took its cameras to twenty six cities around the state to document the Legislature's redistricting hearings, giving citizens real time access to over one hundred hours of these important proceedings. The Ohio Channel is a pioneer in making their video coverage of government embeddable and searchable by using the text from their closed captioning and Washington state's TVW will handle over 2 million individual views of live and

archived streaming video this year— a 350% increase since 2008. Many of these networks supplement their gavel-to-gavel coverage with produced programs such as The Impact, Florida Face to Face or Capitol Update to report on daily activities at the Capitol or add context to the complicated government process. SPANs also provide an unparalleled view into the state electoral process. In the last election cycle, CT-N provided direct access to almost a hundred events around the state, including live coverage of the state nominating conventions, debates, forums, editorial board interviews and discussions with the candidates. It is important to note that although these networks operate in often highly partisan environments, they are universally viewed as non-partisan and highly trusted resources, regardless of the party in power at their State Capitol.

The road here has not been easy, and in most states the path to a fully-realized SPAN is still unattainable. There are currently four state networks modeled after C-SPAN with carriage and funding provided by cable. The rest rely on funding from state governments and must negotiate for carriage in a regulatory environment which up till now did not contemplate our existence. In Connecticut, statewide carriage of CT-N was only achieved after multiple protracted battles with the industry. In Wisconsin, only one of the major carriers has stepped up to carry and fund Wiseye, leaving a major gap in citizen access. Ironically, people in far-flung countries could watch Wiseye's coverage of the events in Madison on Al Jazeera, but half the people of Wisconsin could not. For all of us, carriage on Dish or Direct TV remain a nonstarter; and with no effective way of applying political pressure at the state level, it has been difficult to bring them to the table at all.

The continuing decimation of state capitol press corps point to a failure of the **for**-profit model in performing this critical government-accountability function. The time for a profound and historic change in citizen engagement is now. We believe that with the participation of the telecommunications industry, the continued support of the FCC coupled with the best practices and years of experience from existing public affairs networks, that historic change is within reach.

Thank you for your time this morning.