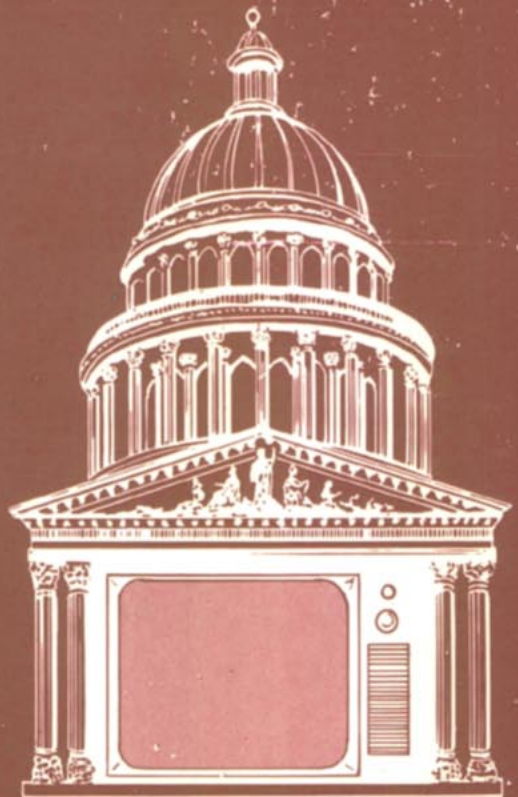


# A New Public Affairs Television Network For The State

Tracy Westen

Beth Givens



## THE CALIFORNIA CHANNEL

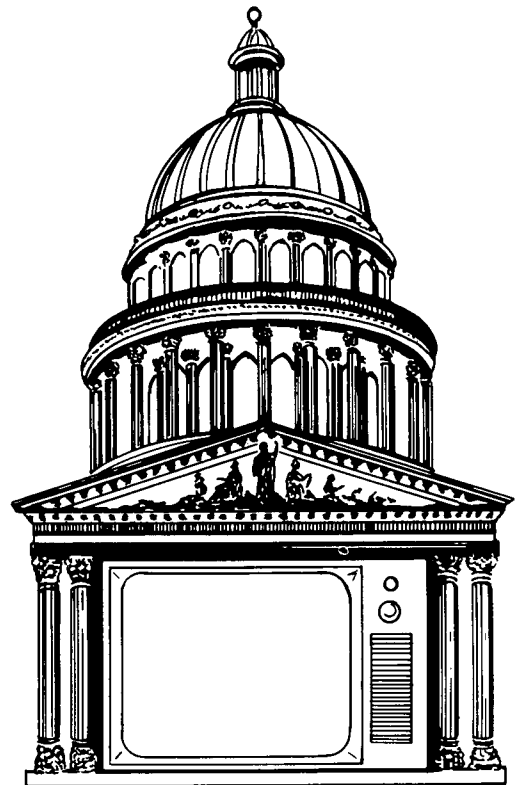
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**Tracy Westen**

**Beth Givens**



# **THE CALIFORNIA CHANNEL**

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# Preface

This report is published in two volumes. The first volume, the executive summary, presents the major findings of the California Channel project and contains, as an appendix, a detailed outline of the contents of the second volume.

The second volume contains the full report, including the executive summary. Background information and research findings are presented in eleven chapters of analysis and nine appendices of supplemental information.

Copies of both volumes are available from the Center for Responsive Government. Send inquiries to the Center at 10951 West Pico Boulevard, Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90064.



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# Foreword

The final report of the California Channel project is the culmination of two years of research into the need for and feasibility of a public affairs television network which focuses on California state government proceedings. The study provides a detailed blueprint for constructing a statewide television network that would allow residents to watch their government representatives in action. Drawing on precedents set by television's coverage of Congress, other state legislatures and parliamentary systems, the study describes the key components of a state public affairs channel: satellite distribution to cable television systems and other media, programming formats, technical designs, costs, funding models and implementation options.

Funding to make this report possible has been provided by the Benton Foundation of Washington, D.C., the California Cable Television Association, the Foundation for Community Service Cable Television, the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation of San Francisco and the John and Mary Markle Foundation of New York. The Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles also provided invaluable assistance and support.

More than 300 individuals gave their assistance to all phases of the project. While, regretfully, the individual contributions of each cannot be fully acknowledged here, project consultants and assistants are listed in Appendix A. The authors and project staff thank them for their valuable advice and assistance. Helpful as these many individuals have been, responsibility for all findings, conclusions and recommendations rests with the authors.

Special appreciation is extended to the following individuals and organizations: the program officers of all the funding agencies for their initial interest in and continued support of the project; Ed Allen, a C-SPAN founder and former president of Western Communications; Spencer Kaitz, President, and Dennis Mangers, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, of the California Cable Television Association; Kathleen Schuler, Executive Director of the Foundation for Community Service Cable Television; Gregg McVicar, Marketing Manager for Pacific Bell, who helped launch the idea of a "Cal-SPAN" while a master's student at the Annenberg School of Communications; Carol Federighi, former President, California League of Women Voters; Susan Swain, Vice President for Corporate Communications of C-SPAN; cable industry representatives Bill Rosendahl, Vice President of Corporate Affairs of Century



Cable in Santa Monica, and Marc Nathanson, President of Falcon Cable Television in Los Angeles; Linda Beatty and Elisabeth Kersten of the California Assembly and Senate offices of research, respectively; and Stuart Tobisman, Leah Bishop and Cindi Kramer of O'Melveny and Myers for *pro bono* legal assistance.

The authors also extend their gratitude to the staffs of both the Annenberg School of Communications and the Center for Responsive Government for their dedication to the project. Particular thanks go to Jean Campbell, Executive Secretary, and Bill Darst, Production Center Manager, of the Annenberg School; and Janice Lark, Administrative Assistant, of the Center for Responsive Government. Faculty members of the Annenberg School and senior staff of the Center for Responsive Government also provided generous assistance. Paul Koplin, new Executive Director of the California Channel, provided invaluable guidance during the final stages of the study.

## **Project Staff**

### **Co-Authors**

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**Beth Givens**, project manager and co-author, has a background in information services with experience in network development, automation and public information. As principal researcher, she designed and conducted many of the studies for the report and supervised the research staff. She is a 1987 graduate of the Annenberg School of Communications master's program in telecommunications policy and holds a master's degree in library and information services.

### **Research Staff: Students in the Annenberg School's M.A. Program in Communications Management**

**Richard Conlon** interviewed administrators of municipal access cable television channels regarding their interest in carrying legislative programming (Chapter 7). He also assisted in organizing the focus groups.

**Steve Grand** prepared the report on C-SPAN for Chapter 3 by visiting Washington, D.C., and interviewing officials of C-SPAN as well as House and Senate television operations.

**Marc S. Jaffe** monitored legislation for the media analysis (Chapter 2). He interviewed legislative committee staff regarding key bills, matched their lists against actual media coverage and analyzed the results.

**Jennifer Matuja** compiled background information related to the need for a California public affairs television channel for Chapter 1.

**Gail Portrey** administered two studies for the California Channel project. She designed, organized and conducted the focus groups, held in four cities, and analyzed the findings. She also coordinated the project's participation in a cooperative statewide public opinion poll, presented in Chapter 1.

**Nancy E. Tack** conducted the five-city content analysis of legislative media coverage during the final three weeks of the 1987 session (Chapter 2). She arranged for television and radio news programs to be monitored on selected days, measured the amount of legislative news covered in each medium and analyzed the results.

**Peter L. Vestal** researched the intricacies of programming a public affairs television channel for Chapter 6 and Appendix E. He also interviewed legislative committee staff for the media analysis.

**Lisa Wiersma** contributed to initial project planning and analyzed cable industry trends for the study (Chapter 7).

**Lynn Winter-Gross** conducted interviews with cable company executives, newspaper journalists, news directors and reporters of commercial and public television stations and instructional television administrators. Her findings are found in Chapters 7 and 8 regarding distribution of California Channel programming.

Additional research assistance was provided by Annenberg student **Kathleen S. Ireland**, who tracked down public opinion polls relevant to the study, and **Daniel J. Kelley**, a USC law school student, who researched potential legal structures for a nonprofit television channel. **Robert Stern, Matthew Stodder, Susie Sugerman** and **Jerry Greenberg** of the Center for Responsive Government provided comments and research assistance.



# Introduction and Summary

*"A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps both.*

*Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."*

*—James Madison*

## **Television's Failure to Cover California State Public Affairs**

California now ranks close to the bottom of all states in its televised coverage of state government. This minimal media attention belies California's cultural and economic status as the most powerful state in the nation. The California Legislature oversees an annual budget of nearly \$50 billion, and the state's economy outranks even Great Britain and Italy in gross national product. While state leaders daily make decisions that affect the lives of its 28 million citizens, most Californians see their state government as only an occasional 15-second television news blip sandwiched between the latest murder and most recent fire.

California's current governmental and regulatory problems present serious challenges to the citizens of the state. Blessed with abundant natural resources and spectacular scenic beauty, the state is confronted with problems of

environmental pollution, unprocessed sewage and toxic waste. Excessive traffic clogs urban freeways. Armed gangs threaten inner city neighborhoods. Public education is falling under heavy criticism. Property tax and income disparities are widening. Waves of immigrants are stretching California's social services to the limit.

The majority of Californians, like most Americans, rely on television as their principal source of information. Yet California's electronic media are spending less time on critical state problems than ever before. The state's commercial television stations routinely ignore the actions of the Legislature. All out-of-town capital news bureaus have been closed. And at the end of a recent Sacramento legislative session, when the Legislature and governor were acting on thousands of bills affecting every aspect of the state's economy, California's leading television and radio stations devoted *less than one minute* per hour newscast to state legislative coverage. Some stations spent more time covering the National Cockroach Contest, Jim and Tammy Bakker Halloween masks and a Dog-and-Owner Look-Alike Contest than pending AIDS legislation, insurance industry reform and anti-pollution devices.

Public television, the standard-bearer of public affairs programming in most other states, fares little better. California is now one of only two states that does not fund public television. No state public television station currently produces a program which regularly discusses the Sacramento political scene.

California's public affairs television coverage is an embarrassment compared to that of other jurisdictions. Television viewers in most states can watch regular public affairs programs with legislative news and analysis of critical state issues. Six states provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of one or both houses and selected committees. C-SPAN presents 24-hour coverage of the United States Congress. Fifty-nine countries allow broadcast coverage of their legislatures, and 17 cover proceedings gavel-to-gavel. Even the Soviet Union has recently provided more live coverage of its Congress of People's Deputies than has California of its state Legislature.

Inadequate electronic media coverage of state government undermines the quality of representative government in California and contributes toward a high level of ignorance on the part of the state's citizens. Constituents have become isolated from legislators and other government officials. Many are ill-prepared to understand and act upon the problems facing the state. The citizens of California cannot make informed decisions on taxes, education, crime, transportation, environmental pollution, child care and other important issues without access to relevant information.

## **A Synopsis of the Report's Principal Findings and Recommendations**

The California Channel report is the result of a two-year study initiated at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communications. Concerned about the lack of media coverage of state government affairs, a team of researchers:

- studied public affairs media coverage in major California markets;
- reviewed public affairs television coverage in other states, the United States Congress and Canadian and Australian parliamentary systems;
- studied other public affairs television systems for programming content, funding, signal distribution and organizational structure;
- solicited the comments of hundreds of experts in California and around the country, including legislators, state officials, cable television executives, public broadcasting representatives, reporters and local government officials;
- conducted a statewide public opinion poll to sample potential viewer interest;
- held focus groups in Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego to explore viewer programming preferences; and
- developed programming proposals, technical requirements, structural options and alternative funding models for a new government affairs television channel.

After extensive analysis, this study has concluded that the people of California would be well served by the creation of a "California Channel." A new statewide public affairs cable television channel, similar to C-SPAN at the federal level, would address the important issues facing the state. The report's principal findings and recommendations include the following:

- **Dual Organizational Structure.** As with C-SPAN, the statewide distribution of public affairs television programming in California should be separated from its origination. Applying this dual organizational approach, the Legislature would install and operate video cameras in its two main chambers, in at least two major committee rooms and in the press conference room. The resulting television coverage would be internally distributed by closed-circuit system to offices throughout the Capitol building.

The California Channel, an independent nonprofit organization, would take the various gavel-to-gavel feeds generated by the Legislature, compile them into a single feed and distribute the programming by satellite to participating cable television systems and other recipients around the state. As the California Channel expands its operation, it would produce additional programming to supplement the legislative coverage.

This dual organizational structure would allow the Legislature to generate its own gavel-to-gavel coverage under guidelines that minimize any impact on existing legislative procedures. At the same time, it would allow the California Channel, an independent organization, to distribute that legislative programming around the state, along with additional news and analysis programs. By serving as a buffer between the Legislature, cable television systems and viewers, the California Channel would ensure the credibility, political neutrality and balance of all programming.



- **Programming Opportunities.** The bulk of California Channel programming would comprise live and unedited coverage of legislative floor debates, committee hearings and press conferences. At a later stage, when fully funded and operational, the California Channel would add its own programming, including news summaries, interviews with legislators and other public officials, viewer call-ins, coverage of regulatory board hearings, California Supreme Court oral arguments, speeches and conferences on public affairs topics, election debates and occasional city council meetings of statewide interest.

- **Distribution Networks.** The California Channel, located in headquarters near the Capitol, would receive at least three live video signals from the Capitol by microwave transmission or optical fiber—separate feeds from the Assembly, the Senate and the press conference room. It would transmit one feed live and tape record the others for subsequent transmission. Programming would be uplinked by the California Channel to a satellite and then retransmitted down to cable systems and other earth stations. Although cable systems would be the primary distributors of California Channel programming into homes, public and commercial television stations could rebroadcast selected segments in their own programming. Educational institutions and rural television viewers outside the range of cable wiring would receive the Channel directly via satellite.

- **Potential Audiences.** Opinion polls conducted by C-SPAN and program producers in other states suggest that California Channel audiences would include a broad spectrum of viewers, with a core audience composed of politically active opinion leaders. In a public opinion poll commissioned for the California Channel, three-fourths of respondents said they were “very” or “somewhat” interested in a new public affairs channel. Seven in ten said they would watch it every day or every week. One-fourth said they would be more likely to subscribe to cable television if such a channel were available.

Beyond cable households, additional segments of the California population are likely to be avid California Channel viewers. Legislators and their staffs would use it to monitor internal legislative proceedings. Lobbyists, public interest groups and others would benefit from their ability to track specific bills. Television, radio and print journalists would use the California Channel as a source of information to enhance their own public affairs coverage. Educators would incorporate California Channel programming into their curricula.

- **Cable Television Carriage.** Cable television is now available to 70% of California homes, and over half the state’s households subscribe. Cable penetration is rapidly expanding as systems are added or rebuilt. Between 20 and 30 percent of California’s cable systems, according to survey data, have sufficient extra capacity to carry the California Channel on its own full-time dedicated channel. Limits in capacity on the remaining systems will become less of a problem in future years as systems rebuild to add channels. Until then, many cable operators have indicated a willingness to carry the California Channel on a shared channel basis with existing programming. Most administrators of government and educational access channels interviewed for this study said they lacked programming to fill their schedules and would welcome at least portions of the California Channel to supplement their own.



- **Legislative Benefits.** A closed-circuit internal monitoring system would increase legislative efficiency, as it has in other governments. Legislators and staff could watch floor debates, committee hearings, press conferences, news summaries, scheduling information and replays of speeches from their offices. The Legislature could also establish a video archive to preserve a permanent historical record of its deliberations. Most significantly, California Channel distribution of the Legislature's video coverage would substantially enhance public understanding of the governmental process. Members of Congress and legislators from other states report greater public awareness of government once viewers can watch its actions take place.

- **Technical Systems.** Before a video system can be installed in the California Legislature and television coverage made available to the public, legislative and California Channel planners must agree upon basic policies and operating assumptions that will determine specific technical systems design. Typical considerations include minimum intrusion into the legislative process, preservation of the existing legislative rules of order and maintenance of the architectural integrity of the Capitol. Planners must also decide what tradeoffs they are willing to make between initial capital costs and ongoing operating expenses.

This report recommends that the Assembly and Senate install and operate state-of-the-art remote-control cameras in the Assembly and Senate chambers, the major committee hearing rooms and the press conference room. Capitol staff would operate cameras from a centrally-located control facility in the Capitol building to minimize intrusion into legislative proceedings. Automated features such as camera selection and text captioning for speaker identification would reduce staffing requirements in the control room. Portable video equipment would allow coverage of additional events.

At California Channel headquarters, a fully-equipped master control facility would receive and tape the Legislature's video signals. The California Channel would distribute programming by leasing or purchasing an uplink and acquiring time on a satellite transponder accessible to cable systems. As its programming expands, portable video equipment would allow coverage of events outside the Capitol building. When the California Channel is fully operational, its programming schedule will include news summaries, interviews, panel discussions and viewer call-in programs produced in its own studio.

- **Cost Projections.** Capital costs to the Legislature for purchasing and installing a minimum-level system with remote-control cameras in one chamber and one committee hearing room is estimated at \$850,000. A more extensive system with cameras in two chambers, two committee rooms and the press conference room would cost approximately \$2 million. Annual operating costs would range from \$443,000 to \$866,000 and would include maintenance, depreciation and staffing levels of six to 12 employees.

Equipment costs for the California Channel, including a master control facility, studio and satellite uplink, range from \$970,000 to \$2.9 million depending on the size of operation. Annual California Channel operating costs are estimated at \$1.3 to \$2.4 million and include satellite transponder leasing, office rent,

administrative overhead, maintenance, depreciation and staffing for eight to 18 employees.

- **Funding Model.** This study recommends that the costs of statewide public affairs television coverage be divided between the Legislature and the California Channel. Installation of the Legislature's equipment, as well as its operation, would be funded by the Legislature and justified on grounds of increased internal efficiency and improved communication with the public. The construction of the California Channel and its operation would be subsidized by foundation and corporate underwriting for the first two to three years.

After a trial period, it is expected that cable television systems will begin to contribute toward the California Channel's cost by paying a nominal license fee. Corporate and foundation underwriting would supplement license fees. As on public television stations, donors would receive program credits to encourage their contributions. Legislative tax credits could help compensate cable systems for carriage of the California Channel.

- **Organization and Implementation.** Establishment of the California Channel as a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation would enable it to receive charitable contributions. It should be independent of all other organizations and immunized against outside attempts at programming control. Members of the board of directors should be chosen to represent the diverse economic, cultural and regional interests across the state.

Guidelines for fair and impartial coverage of legislative proceedings must be developed by both the Legislature and the California Channel. Legislative bodies with gavel-to-gavel coverage usually specify the types of camera shots allowed. They generally require head-and-shoulders views of the person recognized by the presiding officer and prohibit coverage of unrecognized floor action. For its part, the California Channel's code of operation would include clauses that ensure balanced coverage.

California Channel programming could begin with a pilot project originated by one or both legislative chambers, and perhaps distributed at first by a few cable systems. Once operations function smoothly, programming would be made available statewide at a minimum of four hours a day, allowing coverage of one legislative chamber, one committee hearing room and the press conference room. Mid-level operation at eight hours a day would add coverage of a second chamber and committee room and limited mobile camera coverage of special events. Full-scale operation at 12 hours a day would include extensive gavel-to-gavel coverage, news summaries, interviews, roundtable discussions, executive branch proceedings, oral arguments before the California Supreme Court, selected city council meetings and expanded field coverage of special events.

Further details of the report's recommendations are summarized below. Comprehensive analyses of the California Channel proposal, including budgets and technical requirements, are found in the full report.

## **The Need for a Government and Public Affairs Television Channel in California**

"Everything that happens in California winds up in the state Legislature," comments a former editor of the *California Journal*. "Sacramento has become more influential over all Californians than ever before and the trend is continuing." The California Legislature was the first in the nation to meet on a full-time basis. In session over 250 days a year, the Legislature actively intervenes in matters of air and water quality, transportation, education, equal employment, labor relations, insurance, health and safety.

Despite its power, the California Legislature remains substantially hidden from public view. Several factors isolate state government from the people it serves. Key among these are California's great size, the remote location of its capital and its populous legislative districts, the largest in the nation. In addition, reapportionment and the disproportionate flow of campaign contributions to incumbents have drastically reduced competition for elective office. Many potential voters now simply fail to participate in the political process, perhaps alienated by their belief that participation no longer makes a difference.

### ***Television News Has Reduced Its Coverage of State Government***

Like other Americans, Californians obtain most of their news from television. Yet in recent years, the California news media have substantially *reduced* their coverage of the state capital. Television coverage of state government began to wane following the highly visible governorship of Ronald Reagan (1966 to 1974). By October 1988, San Francisco television station KRON had closed Sacramento's last out-of-town news bureau.

Sacramento lawmakers are less accessible to the media than a decade ago. When the Capitol was renovated in the early 1980s, reporters were moved from their offices in the Capitol building to separate quarters, and the potential for informal contacts was reduced. Television stations have instituted "happy talk" formats which deemphasize "serious" political news. In recent years, they have cut their news staffs to reduce costs. The cumulative impact of these changes is the virtual absence of legislative and other state government news on television newscasts.

A California Channel study conducted during the closing weeks of the 1987 legislative session revealed that the most-watched television news programs in five California metropolitan areas devoted only 1.7% of their coverage to state legislative issues. Audiences in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento and Fresno, representing two-thirds of the state's population, received only one minute of legislative news during an average hour newscast. Many legislative stories were as short as 10 seconds. Stations left no time for in-depth analysis, and many ignored important developments altogether.

At the same time, television news programs spent one-third of their news hour on advertising and station promotions. Even sports and weather outranked legislative news. One San Francisco station devoted valuable airtime to the theft of a giant Bullwinkle moose balloon while giving *no coverage* to that day's legislative

committee passage of bills on the community college system, insurance industry reform, the supercollider bond measure, an anti-pollution device for automobiles and a bill to ban liquor licenses for clubs practicing sex discrimination.

Of 253 bills identified as "significant" by legislative aides and acted upon by lawmakers during the closing days of the 1987 session, only 15 were covered by television, 14 by radio and 83 by newspapers. A scant 10 bills were covered in all five markets, mostly by newspapers, and even fewer received five-market television coverage. In short, California's leading television news stations in the five largest markets substantially ignored the vital legislative transactions of the day. Those who relied on television news for information during the busiest legislative period of the year learned little of state public affairs.

Actions of the governor, executive branch agencies and the courts also received minimal attention during the study period. Although their actions, like legislative bills, directly affect the lives of Californians, they received on average less than 45 seconds per hour of television news coverage. In all, television covered one-fourth as many executive branch and court stories as newspapers.

### ***Public Television Has Failed to Fill the Gap in State Public Affairs News Coverage***

Although public broadcast stations in other states play a major role in covering state legislative affairs, such coverage in California has decreased. The California Public Broadcasting Commission (CPBC) was created in 1975 to support programming that served the public's informational needs. When CPBC funding was terminated in 1983, stations lost a substantial financial incentive to produce and distribute statewide public affairs programming. California is now one of only two states (along with Texas) which provides no funding for public broadcasting. Although state funding once supported the production of "California Week in Review"—a press corps roundtable discussion—such programming no longer exists.

### ***A New Public Affairs Television Channel Would Enhance Citizen Awareness of Public Policy Issues***

Inadequate media coverage of state government contributes toward an inactive and ill-informed electorate. Californians' apathy and ignorance of the political process is reflected at the ballot box and in public opinion polls. California voter participation ranks in the bottom fourth among states. A 1984 Field poll concluded that 64% of Californians lacked "public trust and confidence" in the Legislature. Another survey of Californians placed the Legislature in the bottom one-third of public institutions in trustworthiness, ranking it between the Post Office and CIA and well below the United States Congress and Supreme Court.

The California Channel study conducted a statewide public opinion poll and held focus groups in major California cities to assess the adequacy of existing public affairs media coverage. Over half the poll respondents said they were dissatisfied with their current sources of California government news. Focus group participants criticized local television news as biased, glossy, sensational and primarily geared toward increasing ratings points.



Nearly three-fourths of those surveyed in the California Channel's poll expressed interest in a new public affairs television channel, and half said they would watch it at least once a week. Representatives of the television, newspaper and cable television media interviewed for this study supported improved coverage of state government affairs. Educators were enthusiastic about the potential availability of California Channel coverage in the schools. Many government officials interviewed decried the lack of public affairs programming and supported improvements in statewide media coverage. In short, a broad spectrum of Californians agree that a new public affairs television channel for the state would help correct the deficiencies in government news now available to the public.

## **C-SPAN's Model Coverage of the United States Congress**

In 1979 the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) began to distribute gavel-to-gavel coverage of the United States House of Representatives via satellite to cable television systems nationwide. C-SPAN II added a separate channel with full coverage of the Senate in 1986. Today C-SPAN is available in 43 million homes via nearly 3,200 participating cable systems. C-SPAN offers a successful model of legislative coverage upon which the California Channel can build.

### ***C-SPAN's Programming Costs Are Shared by Congress and Participating Cable Television Systems***

C-SPAN's programming results from the shared organizational and financial efforts of Congress and the cable television industry. The House and Senate fund, produce and control their own internal video coverage. Rules of operation seek to eliminate bias by requiring head-and-shoulders views of speakers and prohibiting reaction shots or cutaways to unrecognized floor action.

C-SPAN neither owns the equipment in the House or Senate nor employs the technicians who operate the cameras and call the shots. It simply plugs in and accepts the video feeds offered by both houses. C-SPAN distributes these feeds along with other programming through its satellite uplink to cable systems nationwide. It carries all Congressional proceedings live and without editing. C-SPAN also produces and transmits its own programming when Congressional proceedings are not in progress.

C-SPAN began its operation in 1979 with \$500,000 in construction costs, a staff of four and an annual operating budget of \$200,000. It now has a staff of 140 and an annual budget of \$12 million. C-SPAN receives 90% of its budget from cable systems which pay a license fee of four cents per subscriber per month for their first 200,000 subscribers and 2.5 cents for each additional subscriber. Corporate and individual donations make up five percent of C-SPAN's budget. Additional revenues come from tape duplication, magazine sales and miscellaneous services.

### ***Members of the Public and Congress Give C-SPAN Strong Support***

A 1987 survey indicated that C-SPAN had increased its viewership 43% since 1984, and that one-third of all households receiving C-SPAN regularly watched its

programming. By 1988, an election year, C-SPAN's viewership increased even further, doubling to 21.6 million. The average viewer watches 9.9 hours per month, and dedicated C-SPAN "junkies" (12% of the audience) watch over 20 hours a month. Viewers are generally upscale in education and income, although recent surveys indicate that the viewer profile is broadening. C-SPAN viewers vote at nearly twice the rate of non-viewers, contribute more to political campaigns and are more politically informed. They also report greater satisfaction with cable television.

When C-SPAN began its operation, some members of Congress expressed concern that legislative procedures would be altered under the influence of television. They feared that legislators would play to the cameras or that Congress would be portrayed inaccurately or simplistically. Although C-SPAN's coverage has not been without effect, most of these fears have not materialized.

In 1986 the Senate authorized a two-month trial run and commissioned a study to assess television's impact before deciding to open the chambers to cameras. Out of 20 types of floor activity monitored, the only change clearly linked to television coverage was an increase in "special orders," speeches made before the regular session. (Special orders are not allowed in California under the Legislature's rules.)

Since the experiment, many opponents of television coverage have become supporters. Senator Albert Gore concluded that television coverage "changed the patterns of Senate floor activity very little." Senator Robert Byrd observed that senators delivered "shorter and more polished speeches." And Senator John Danforth commented that "the playing to the cameras and the galleries that I expected just doesn't occur."

Studies indicate that C-SPAN has enhanced communication with constituents and increased the efficiency of internal operations through in-office monitoring of floor proceedings. Legislators report that C-SPAN has increased their mail and helped to build the fires of constituent scrutiny under key issues. A recent profile of C-SPAN viewers indicates that watching C-SPAN has motivated many to volunteer for campaigns, study politics in school and even run for public office.

## **Public Affairs Television in the Fifty States**

In the hierarchy of state legislative television programming, California ranks near the bottom. Viewers in nearly three-fourths of the states can watch regular legislative news and analysis programs. Gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage is available in six states. One state even covers oral arguments before its supreme court. In California, however, no commercial television station, public station or cable system provides any regularly scheduled state legislative coverage.

### ***Legislative Coverage in Other States Spans a Broad Range of Programming Formats***

Programming formats covering the activities of state legislatures and other government bodies are wide-ranging and diverse. Six states—Massachusetts,

Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oregon and Rhode Island—offer gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative proceedings. Others, such as North Carolina, South Dakota, Florida, Georgia and Kentucky air lengthy unedited segments of committee hearings and floor proceedings. Some, like North Carolina and New Jersey, present a broad array of state public affairs programming encompassing discussion programs, viewer call-ins, documentaries, minority-oriented and foreign language programs. Still others offer special media services for legislators such as electronic newsletters and cable video programs (Minnesota, Washington, New York), in-house video monitoring capabilities (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Oregon and Virginia) and audio teleconferencing and computer communications (Alaska).

A typical public affairs program format among the states is the daily or weekly legislative news summary. Available in 36 states, such legislative programming is usually produced by public broadcasting stations. Broader public policy issues are explored in magazine style or documentary programs, aired in at least 30 states, primarily by public television. Viewers in at least 25 states can tune in to two or more programs on state legislative and other public affairs issues.

Although few states have conducted surveys to determine viewer profiles of legislative programming, existing studies report significant audiences. A 1984 Kentucky survey, for example, revealed that 24% of the state's population watched excerpts of legislative proceedings, weekly commentaries and viewer call-in shows. A 1982 Nebraska study concluded that one-fifth of Nebraskans regularly watched a weekly legislative news program. Viewers of legislative programming, according to a 1982 Florida study, are better educated than the general population, politically more active and frequent campaign participants.

### ***Legislative Programming on Cable Is Growing***

In the majority of states, legislative and other public affairs programming is produced by public television stations. Distribution of legislative programming by cable television is growing as innovative programming formats are introduced which require cable's multichannel capacity. Five of the six states with gavel-to-gavel coverage distribute it by cable television. In some states, legislative media offices and executive branch agencies produce programming for distribution on cable. In other states, cable systems create legislative programming for their own local origination channels. Rhode Island, the most ambitious user of cable for legislative television, programs a statewide government access channel with House and Senate proceedings. Interest in gavel-to-gavel coverage is growing in a number of other states where studies are being conducted and experiments launched.

### **Parliamentary Television Coverage in Canada and Australia**

The Canadian and Australian parliaments have pioneered innovative uses of video and computer technologies. Their successes provide useful models for the proposed California Channel.



### ***The Canadian Parliament Developed North America's First Legislative Video System***

Since 1977 the Canadian Parliament has operated a remote-control video system to cover the House of Commons. It generates seven hours of gavel-to-gavel coverage a day, four days a week. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) acquires the feed, provides an announcer to summarize the day's proceedings and distributes the signal by satellite to over 400 cable systems, reaching 85% of Canada's population.

The Parliament also operates an internal Office Automation Services and Information System (OASIS) which consists of a 75-channel cable system available to members and staff in the government complex. OASIS contains separate channels for House floor debates (one in English, one in French), information on schedules, communications from party whips, press conferences and audio monitoring of Senate proceedings and committee hearings. Channels are also available for condensed versions of Canadian regional and national newscasts, replays of specific programs, local cable television channels, C-SPAN and up-to-date airline information. Electronic mail has been added to link members' Parliamentary offices with their constituent offices.

Proposals are now being considered to start a new Canadian Parliamentary Channel (CPaC) in 1990, modeled on C-SPAN. In addition to House of Commons proceedings, the new channel would cover conventions and conferences, produce viewer call-in shows and offer excerpts from provincial legislative proceedings. The cable industry will provide start-up funds, and subscriber fees will cover operating costs.

A similar, but smaller-scale, legislative video system is operated by the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Using state-of-the-art remote-control equipment installed in 1986, it distributes gavel-to-gavel proceedings of floor debates and committees to provincial cable systems. Assembly members are served by an in-house monitoring system combining video and text channels.

### ***Australia's Parliament Is Constructing the Video System of the Future***

Australia's new \$1 billion parliamentary complex houses the most extensive and sophisticated remote-control video system of its kind in the world. Video equipment is integrated into the architecture of the building. When the equipment operates on "automatic" mode, a member need only speak and a computer automatically activates the microphone, focuses a camera on the speaker and superimposes an identifying caption over the video picture. Language translation and services for the hearing impaired are available in the galleries. An in-house cable system delivers 45 video and 29 audio channels to members' offices.

### ***Parliamentary Systems Offer Important Innovations for Televising Legislative Proceedings***

Parliamentary television systems have pioneered a number of significant innovations for televising legislative proceedings. All take a "high-tech" approach, utilizing remote-controlled operations and low-light cameras to reduce

intrusiveness. Automated features minimize staff and operating expenses. Internal video monitoring systems improve staff efficiency and increase access to information. Customized video services are available to all members. And an historic record is preserved of parliamentary deliberations. All parliaments studied give their video signals to independent broadcast or cable organizations for distribution to the public.

## **Programming Opportunities for a California Channel**

California offers a rich array of programming opportunities for a new statewide public affairs television channel. Programming by a fully operational California Channel might ultimately include:

- floor sessions and committee hearings of the Assembly and Senate;
- press conferences, speeches and conferences on public policy issues;
- oral arguments before the California Supreme Court and occasionally the Courts of Appeal;
- hearings of executive branch agencies and regulatory boards;
- selected meetings of city councils and county boards of supervisors on topics of statewide interest;
- election coverage of debates, speeches and public forums;
- news summaries and videotaped recaps of the day's events;
- roundtable discussions, legislator interviews, viewer call-ins and press corps analyses; and
- other programming about California, including documentaries, locally-originated cable programs and high quality public access shows of statewide interest.

Participants in focus groups conducted by the California Channel study recommended that a new public affairs channel present information clearly and objectively and allow viewers to form their own conclusions. Their highest preference was for programs that helped them understand state public policy issues, for example, documentaries and educational specials. Participants also favored news formats. Gavel-to-gavel coverage was more controversial. Some participants placed great value on its unedited nature; others found it uninteresting. Overall, participants felt that programming should be scheduled at convenient times of the day, cover a wide range of topics, include issues of interest to local and rural audiences and be well-produced but not "slick." A statewide public opinion poll conducted by the California Channel study generally confirmed these recommendations.

### ***A Mixture of Edited and Unedited Programming Is Desirable***

Focus group and poll responses suggest that California Channel programming strike a balance between unedited and edited material. Therefore, this study recommends that gavel-to-gavel programming of key government

proceedings be available during the daytime—live whenever possible, tape-delayed when necessary. Initially, programming would emphasize unedited coverage of Assembly and Senate floor proceedings, committee hearings and press conferences. As the California Channel grows, meetings of executive branch agencies, Supreme Court deliberations, selected city council meetings from around the state and other programs could be added.

Evening programming would be produced in segments of definite length—such as 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., or 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.—to make cable television carriage more convenient. Nightly programming would include extended excerpts from floor debates, committee hearings and other proceedings. News summaries, interviews, roundtable discussions and viewer call-in programs would be added when the California Channel expands its operation to include produced programs.

During Fridays and weekends when the Legislature is not in session, the California Channel could repeat the key programming of the week. As the California Channel increases its programming, it could add coverage of public policy conferences, city council meetings, documentaries obtained from independent producers, selected local origination and public access programming and the proceedings of other government agencies.

A California Channel would thus serve a dual distribution function. It would distribute the programming generated by other institutions (for example, legislative floor debates and committee hearings), and it would supplement this coverage with programming of its own in other time periods. Viewers could monitor actual government proceedings during daytime sessions and view excerpts, summaries and contextual analyses during the evenings. California Channel programming might initially start with as few as two hours a day and later expand to a 24-hour operation.

### ***Some Modification to the C-SPAN Model Will Be Necessary***

Although C-SPAN serves as a valuable model for the California Channel, circumstances unique to this state will require modification in its implementation. C-SPAN, for example, uses two cable channels to deliver House and Senate proceedings. But few California cable systems have the channel capacity to carry one full-time state public affairs channel, much less two. The California Channel will only have a single channel to transmit Assembly and Senate proceedings, some of which are conducted simultaneously. It must therefore distribute some proceedings live and tape others for later airing.

Programming must also consist of more than gavel-to-gavel coverage. Although some viewers will prefer to see live daytime coverage of legislative proceedings, others want condensations or summaries, especially if shown in the evening when viewing is more convenient. Many favor news and analysis programs that enhance their understanding of the day's events. Other viewers are interested in programming that covers events outside of Sacramento, such as selected Supreme Court oral arguments and city council meetings of broad state interest. To avoid a narrow or parochial Sacramento orientation, California

Channel programming will have to strike a balance between these competing interests.

California Channel programming cannot be transmitted only when the Legislature is in session. Cable operators may have difficulty carrying gavel-to-gavel coverage which would be indeterminate in length and transmitted at irregular times. Because the success of the California Channel will depend on voluntary carriage by participating cable systems, programming must be offered to them in convenient formats and time periods. Programming should thus be transmitted in specific segments at the same time every day and evening.

## **Distribution of the California Channel Via Satellite and Cable Television**

California's great size dictates satellite technology as the most efficient option for statewide transmission. California Channel programming would be transmitted by an uplink (an earth-based transmitter aimed at the sky) to a satellite and then beamed down to earth in a broad signal pattern (or "footprint") covering all of California. The satellite signal would be received by cable systems, broadcast stations and other media for retransmission into homes. It would also be available to homes and organizations with their own satellite dishes. Alternative "backbone" distribution media such as microwave transmitters, telephone company long lines and optical fiber are prohibitively expensive and would not blanket the state as effectively as satellite transmission.

### ***Cable Systems Are Best Suited for Signal Distribution into Homes***

Cable television has two major advantages over other transmission media for distribution of the California Channel. First, cable is available in most communities and could deliver the California Channel to a large audience. Cable television systems now pass 70% of California households. Just over half of all Californians subscribe to cable, and the number of subscriptions is increasing. Second, cable has multichannel capacity, allowing it to carry a wide range of special interest programming similar to that of the California Channel. The average California cable system has 36 channels, and some have over 100.

Other technologies for distributing the California Channel into homes are not feasible. Commercial and public television stations lack sufficient programming capacity. Low power television stations (LPTV), multichannel multipoint distribution services (MMDS) and direct broadcast satellites (DBS) also lack the extensive channel capacity of cable and are not yet widely available.

Distribution of California Channel programming via cable, however, is not without its difficulties. Many cable systems, especially those with 36 or fewer channels, lack vacant channels. Others may be reluctant to give up channel space for programming that may not be clearly profitable or widely viewed by the public. On the other hand, some larger systems—particularly in the more populous markets—currently have vacant channels and could make them available to the California Channel. Channel capacity problems are likely to dissipate in the future as cable systems are rebuilt with substantially more channels.



Until then, a number of cable systems indicate they are willing to allocate unused portions of existing channels for California Channel programming. Many carry substantially unfilled municipal or educational access channels set aside for programming generated by local governments or educational institutions. Interviews with administrators of these access channels indicate they support the idea of sharing their channel space with the California Channel. They believe statewide public affairs programming would complement their local programming and fill unused portions of the day's schedule.

Differences in costs between various satellite delivery systems may also affect distribution of the California Channel. Cable systems currently receive much of their programming from a few satellites which specialize in cable programming. Because these satellites are in high demand, the purchase of time on them by the California Channel would be expensive. Transponder time on other satellites is less expensive, but many cable systems may not have the appropriate dishes to receive their signals. Widespread distribution of California Channel programming may therefore require major expenditures, either for high-traffic satellite time or the purchase of satellite antennas for cable systems. The current satellite situation is relatively fluid, however, and will need to be reassessed by the time the California Channel is launched.

### ***Additional Paths Are Available for California Channel Distribution***

A major benefit of the California Channel will be its availability to the existing news media. Because television stations no longer maintain Sacramento news bureaus, their ability to cover Sacramento proceedings is limited. Reception of the California Channel in television, radio and newspaper newsrooms in Sacramento and around the state will enable reporters to enhance their stories and tackle issues they might otherwise have missed.

Educational institutions would also use California Channel programming to enhance their curricula. Many California schools and colleges have satellite dishes to receive educational programming. Educators contacted for this study expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of incorporating California Channel programming into their course instruction. They stressed that the signal should be unscrambled.

California's rural residents have special television reception and programming needs. Many live in areas that are underserved by existing broadcast media. Rural cable systems are often small, lack channel capacity and rarely reach homes outside city boundaries. Rural residents frequently rely on private satellite dishes for television service. Unscrambled California Channel programming via home satellite dishes would provide a valuable link to statewide discussions of policy issues.

## **Technical and Budget Requirements**

During the past decade, numerous technological advances have been made in the design of legislative video systems. Remote-control cameras minimize

intrusion into the legislative process and reduce long-term personnel and other operating costs. Computer-controlled equipment can memorize hundreds of pre-set camera positions, automatically train cameras on legislators recognized to speak and place textual identification (name, district and party affiliation) at the bottom of the screen. Low-light cameras have eliminated the need for hot and distracting lighting systems.

While the technical features of a legislative video system may seem complex, they are relatively straightforward in design and operation. Policy considerations, on the other hand, are unique to each legislative body and are the primary determinants of video system design. The California Legislature must decide how many chambers or committee rooms it wants to cover, where to position cameras and lighting for maximum range and minimal intrusion, where to locate control facilities within the Capitol building, what protocols to adopt for camera operations, whether to keep video recordings as an official archives of proceedings and how to preserve the historical architectural integrity of the Capitol.

### ***A Comprehensive Legislative Video System Would Cover Floor Debates, Committees and Press Conferences***

Foremost among these decisions is how comprehensive a system the Legislature wishes to install. A minimum-level system would place fixed-position, remote-control cameras in one chamber, its major committee hearing room and the press conference room. Equipment to operate the remote-control drives, switchers and signal routers would be placed in a separate room, perhaps Room 1200 in the basement which already serves as the hub of Capitol audio and video wiring.

A mid-level system would add remote-control cameras to the other chamber and its major committee hearing room, thereby providing coverage of both houses. In a large-scale system, portable camera equipment would supplement fixed installations by televising proceedings in additional committee rooms.

Regardless of the level of television coverage provided by the Legislature, a video system opens up the opportunity for a number of ancillary services. A multichannel closed-circuit video system could be installed in the Capitol building to distribute signals to individual offices. Assembly proceedings from floor sessions and committees might appear on one channel, Senate proceedings on a second, press conferences on a third and scheduling information on a fourth. The "squawk box," which currently provides audio coverage from committee rooms, could be carried on additional channels. Sacramento's 36-channel cable system, which carries C-SPAN and C-SPAN II, could be brought into the Capitol and added to the internal system as well. Large-screen monitors for public viewing could be placed in anterooms.

The Legislature may want to preserve a video record of its proceedings for historical and research purposes by establishing a video archives. It might also want to construct its own studio which would allow members to prepare electronic newsletters, video news releases and cable television programs.

### ***The California Channel Requires Production and Recording Facilities, Studio and Transmission Capability***

To establish itself as a credible media organization, the California Channel cannot afford to break down or periodically leave the air. Therefore, its video and satellite systems will require reliable broadcast quality equipment with dependable backup capabilities. Equipment components will include:

- an optical fiber or microwave link to transmit video programming from the Capitol to California Channel headquarters;
- a master control facility to monitor and record incoming legislative video signals, compile programming and select and control outgoing programming;
- portable field equipment to televise events outside the Capitol;
- a professional studio to generate news programs, interviews, call-ins, roundtable discussions and other programs;
- an uplink to beam its signal to a communications satellite; and
- the lease of satellite transponder time to transmit California Channel programming down to the antennas of cable television systems, broadcast stations and educational institutions around the state.

Initiation of California Channel programming can proceed most efficiently if its equipment installation is coordinated with the Legislature's own video system. Many legislators in both houses believe television coverage is desirable and inevitable. During the time that the California Channel study has been conducted, legislative leaders and staff members have actively explored ways to televise proceedings. In the event that a legislative decision is delayed, however, the California Channel could begin operating on an interim basis by using portable equipment to cover selected legislative proceedings.

### ***A Public Affairs Television Channel Can Be Launched at Moderate Cost***

Video system design involves a tradeoff between initial capital costs and ongoing operating expenses. Less expensive systems generally require more personnel and higher maintenance costs. Higher quality professional-level systems, especially those with labor-saving automated features, cost more initially but generally last longer, thereby minimizing maintenance, equipment replacement and staffing requirements. Because nonprofit and public sector institutions are generally not funded to upgrade and replace equipment frequently, this study recommends installation of professional-standard equipment for both the Legislature and the California Channel. The equipment may cost more at the outset, but its long-range cost savings will be significant.

Specific system designs will be determined through extensive planning by both the Legislature and the California Channel organization. Comprehensive engineering studies of the Legislature's operation will identify historic preservation concerns, lighting levels, control room location, cable runs, remodeling needs and, ultimately, system design. Further engineering studies



conducted by the California Channel will determine the equipment requirements for its production facility and the transmission paths from the Capitol to the master control facility and from there to the communications satellite. Engineering studies can cost as much as \$100,000 for each organization.

Satellite transmission is expected to be the major operating cost for the California Channel. Satellite transponder time can start at \$350 and exceed \$1,000 an hour. With volume discounts available for eight or more hours of transmission a day, the lease of a full-time satellite transponder is estimated at nearly \$800,000 a year. Major capital expenditures such as a studio and satellite uplink can be leased temporarily until the California Channel expands its operation.

The following cost projections indicate initial capital expenses and annual operating budgets at three levels of operation. Estimates cannot reflect price fluctuations due to inflation, the changing value of the dollar against foreign currency, technical advances and the findings of in-depth engineering studies.

- **Minimum-Level Operation.** The California Channel transmits programming four hours a day consisting of live and, in some cases, tape-delayed coverage of the gavel-to-gavel proceedings of one chamber, its major committee room and the press conference room. Programming is supplemented with municipal access channel programs of statewide interest and independently-produced public affairs documentaries on California topics. Legislative operations are staffed with six employees and the California Channel with eight employees.

	Initial Capital Costs	Annual Operating Costs
Legislature	\$1,150,000	\$443,000
California Channel	\$970,000	\$1,336,000

- **Mid-Level Operation.** Programming is expanded to eight hours a day and includes live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel coverage of both legislative chambers, the major committee room of each house as well as the press conference room. Portable equipment provides some coverage of special events around the capital including awards ceremonies and public affairs-related speeches and conferences. Municipal access and other independently-produced programs supplement legislative coverage. Legislative operations are staffed with nine employees and the California Channel with 12 employees.

	Initial Capital Costs	Annual Operating Costs
Legislature	\$2,000,000	\$705,000
California Channel	\$1,250,000	\$2,078,000

- **Large-Scale Operation.** This option combines gavel-to-gavel programming with a variety of produced programs such as news summaries, viewer call-ins, roundtable discussions and documentaries. Programming is transmitted

12 hours a day. California Channel cost estimates include the purchase of a three-camera studio, satellite uplink and field production units. Legislative operations are staffed with 12 employees and the California Channel with 18 employees.

	<b>Initial Capital Costs</b>	<b>Annual Operating Costs</b>
Legislature	\$2,170,000	\$866,000
California Channel	\$2,880,000	\$2,396,000

Given the need for improved media coverage of legislative proceedings and state public policy issues, the costs to produce a full-fledged statewide public affairs television channel are remarkably low. Once installed, a large-scale legislative video system would cost the Legislature \$866,000 a year to operate, only three cents per citizen per year. In a state the size of California with an annual budget approaching \$50 billion, these expenditures seem a cost-efficient means to enhance communication with the public.

## **Funding Options**

The successful creation of a new public affairs television channel for the state of California will require independent, reliable and long-term sources of funding. Funding must be structured to minimize the potential for programming interference from political sources and special interests. Although full funding and operation of government television services has been adopted by legislative bodies in some states, it is not recommended for California. A single funding source raises the specter of content control and leaves the channel open to the vagaries of the annual budgeting process.

This report recommends a joint funding model, similar to the Congressional/C-SPAN approach, in which the costs of the system are divided between the Legislature and the California Channel. It recommends that a mixture of funding sources be used to sustain the California Channel, including foundation and corporate grants, cable television system license fees, sales of video services and possible legislative tax credits.

### ***The Legislature Should Fund Its Own Internal Operations***

The United States Congress, a number of individual states and Canadian and Australian parliaments have all benefited from internal video monitoring systems which enable members and staff to watch legislative proceedings from their offices. A comparable legislative video system would give the California Legislature a powerful information system to modernize and enhance its current facilities. More significantly, by installing the necessary equipment and thus sharing the program origination costs of the California Channel, the Legislature will also be helping the people of California participate in legislative deliberations.

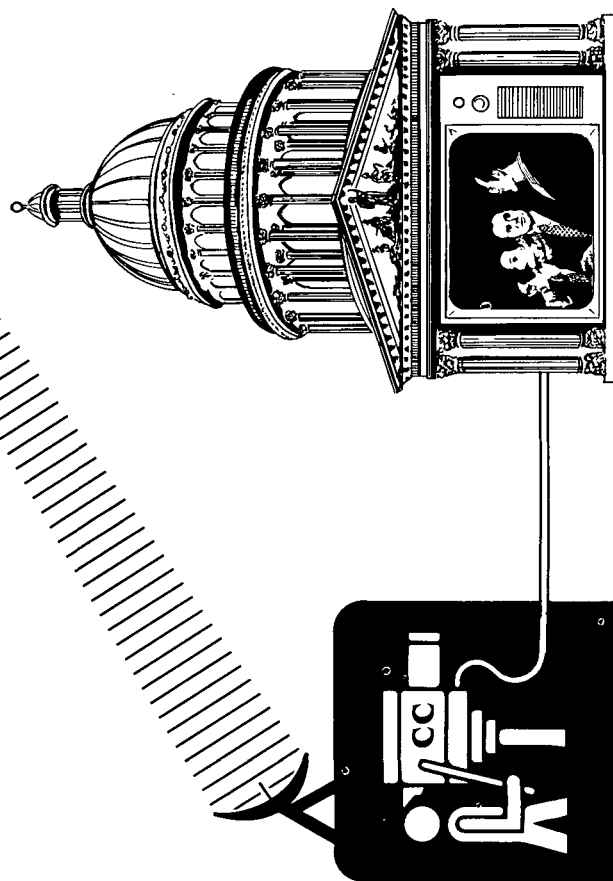
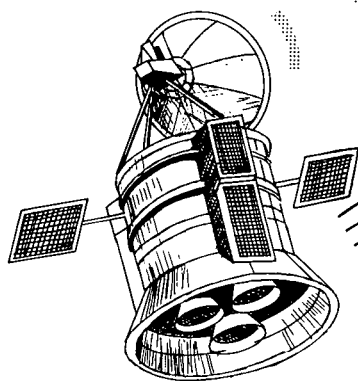
# A New Public Affairs Television Network For The State

## LEGISLATURE:

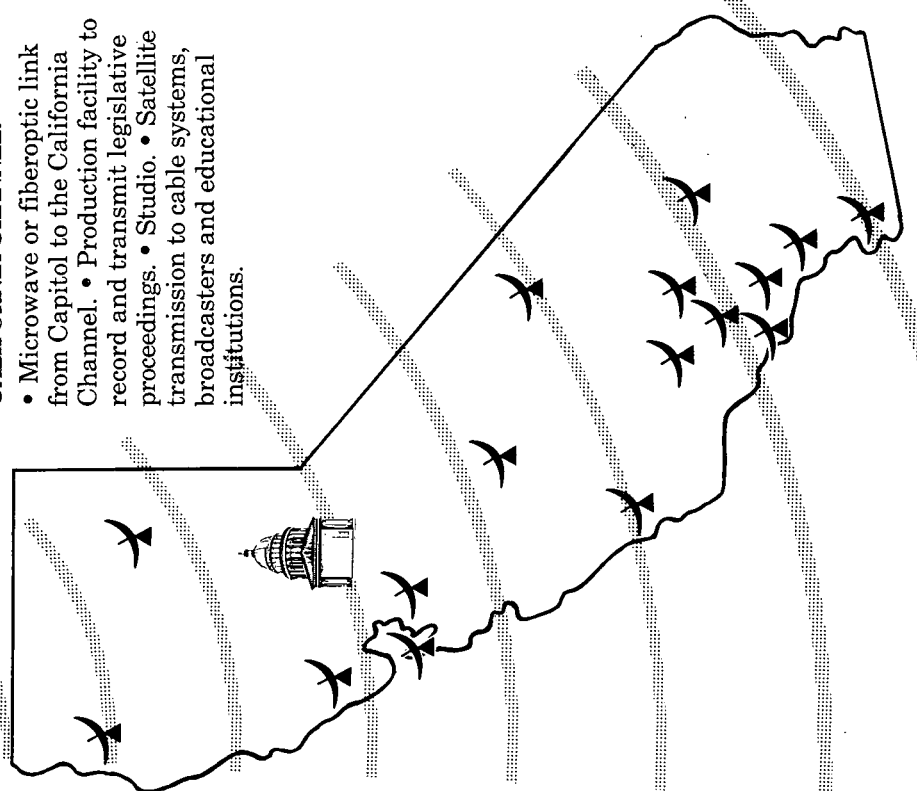
- Remote-control cameras in Assembly, Senate, main committee rooms and press conference room.
- In-house closed-circuit television system.

## CALIFORNIA CHANNEL:

- Microwave or fiberoptic link from Capitol to the California Channel.
- Production facility to record and transmit legislative proceedings.
- Studio.
- Satellite transmission to cable systems, broadcasters and educational institutions.



# THE CALIFORNIA CHANNEL



### ***Start-Up Funding for the California Channel Should Come from Foundation and Corporate Underwriting***

Construction costs and start-up funding should be requested from major California foundations and corporate underwriters for the first two to three years of operation. California foundations and corporations are among the leading philanthropists in the nation. They have supported a wide range of projects benefiting the people of California, including aid to scientific research, education, health, transportation, poverty, housing and political reform. Conversations with foundation and corporate leaders indicate a willingness to support the California Channel. Construction and initial operating grants would make possible the state's first television network devoted to the examination of the processes of government.

### ***Ongoing Funding Would Come from Cable License Fees, Corporate Underwriting and Sales of Services***

When the California Channel has completed its first full year of operation, cable systems and the public will have had the opportunity to judge its merit as a source of state public affairs programming. If program quality is high and viewers value the service, continued financial support would be generated in part by cable system license fees of no more than a few cents per subscriber per month.

Additional sources of revenue would include corporate and foundation underwriting, resale of satellite transponder time, rental of facilities, sales of video tapes, magazine subscriptions and individual donations. With a combination of cable license fees and supplemental income, the California Channel should be self-sustaining by the fourth year of operation.

The Legislature might also provide cable systems and donors to the California Channel with tax credits, offering them a substantial incentive to support its operations. A 50% tax credit to cable systems for California Channel license fees, for example, would reduce actual subscriber fees significantly. A 100% tax credit would, in effect, reduce the license fee to zero. Tax credits at the federal level have been used frequently to encourage business investments, energy savings, research and historic preservation.

## **Implementation of the California Channel**

The California Channel's organizational structure must function to ensure the objectivity and balance of its programming. Rules of procedure must be carefully devised by both the Legislature and the California Channel to provide fair and impartial coverage.

### ***The California Channel Should Be Independent and Separate from the Political Process***

Some state legislative television systems are funded and operated by the legislatures themselves. Others involve joint participation by legislatures and publicly funded organizations, such as public television stations. Still others, like C-SPAN, are completely separate from the legislatures they cover.

The C-SPAN approach, which this report recommends, gives responsibility for the distribution of legislative programming to an organization which is independent from the Legislature and other institutions. This structure maximizes the credibility of both the Legislature and the organization which distributes its programming. If programming were solely funded and provided by the Legislature, viewers might fear that it would be slanted to portray legislators in a favorable light. Moreover, other forms of programming desired by the public—analysis of legislative proceedings, newscasts, interviews and roundtable discussions—could not credibly originate from the Legislature.

This study also recommends that the California Channel be incorporated as an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt California corporation. To eliminate the danger of conflicting priorities, the California Channel should not be part of any other existing organization such as a university or state college. In addition, the board of directors should be of the highest reputation and reflect the full range of California's diverse population. Some directors should have media experience and others should be drawn from the educational, business and public interest communities.

### ***The Legislature and the California Channel Can Adopt Rules to Ensure Politically Balanced Coverage***

Legislators who question the desirability of televised coverage typically express concern that the presence of cameras will require them to change legislative procedures, encourage grandstanding, stimulate lengthy speeches, allow biased or partisan coverage or focus on such seemingly unprofessional behavior as sleeping or eating in legislative chambers. Such problems, however, have generally not occurred in state and national legislatures which allow extensive television coverage. Over time, legislators become accustomed to the presence of television cameras in the chambers and tend to forget about them altogether.

Some state and national legislatures which provide gavel-to-gavel coverage have developed rules of procedure to prevent imbalanced or embarrassing coverage. These rules typically require cameras to be focused only on the legislator who has been recognized by the presiding officer. They sometimes limit coverage to head-and-shoulders shots and generally prohibit wide angle views that might capture a legislator unawares. Reaction shots, cutaways and panning are also banned except on special occasions such as ceremonial events.

The California Channel must also adopt programming guidelines to ensure that its coverage is impartial and balanced. In adopting a code of operations, the California Channel should consider the following provisions:

- The highest programming priority should be live unedited coverage of Assembly and Senate floor and committee proceedings.
- When proceedings occur at the same time, the California Channel should transmit one session live and tape the others for later transmission, rotating equally among both houses and all committees.
- Programming must not be used to promote or oppose the candidacy of any person for elective office.



- Cable operators shall have no power of censorship over the programming transmitted.
- Programming shall be made available without charge to other media organizations in excerpts of up to three minutes.

### ***Implementation of the California Channel Should Begin Immediately***

The first phase for building the California Channel will involve establishing the organization and selecting a blue-ribbon board of directors. The California Channel should be formed as a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation, allowing it to receive charitable contributions. Its directors will be responsible for ensuring that programming is balanced, politically neutral and of the highest quality. The board should include opinion leaders from all sectors of the state and be balanced with women, minorities and representatives of urban and rural areas. Start-up activities for the new organization will include promotion, marketing, fund raising and discussions with the Legislature and the cable television industry.

The second or demonstration phase will involve the first two to three years of actual operation when legislative coverage begins and programming is delivered to the public. Equipment will be installed, full-scale marketing efforts begun and operations fine-tuned. By the beginning of the fourth year, the California Channel should be fully operational and self-sustaining. The people of California will finally have a window on the world of state government and public policy.

### **Conclusion**

Democracy rests on an informed electorate as well as free and open communication between the citizens and their elected representatives. More than ever, California needs to build new channels of communication between the government and the people. As California begins to face the economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century, a modern video link is essential to transmit the activities of government into citizens' homes.

A new public affairs television channel for the state is timely and needed. Never before has California been confronted with such pressing state problems. Never before has there been a greater need for improved communication between the government and the citizenry. The technology now exists to make a statewide public affairs cable channel available at a reasonable cost. Californians should take this vital step to move their systems of politics and communications into the twenty-first century.



## **PART I**

# **The Problem and the Need**



## **Chapter 1**

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# **California's Need for a Statewide Government and Public Affairs Television Channel**

California is a dominant economic and cultural power in the United States. Yet it trails most other states in the extent to which its citizens can monitor the actions of state government through the electronic media. Ironically, the media capital of the United States—home of some of the nation's largest television, radio, cable and newspaper markets, as well as Hollywood's movie and television industries—pays scant attention to the proceedings of its own state government.

The healthy functioning of the modern democratic state depends in large part on the ability of citizens to monitor the actions of their elected representatives through media coverage. Television, the primary source of news for most Americans, is increasingly used by local, state and national governments to reach the public.

- Fifty-nine countries allow broadcast coverage of their legislatures, and 17 cover proceedings gavel-to-gavel.
- C-SPAN transmits gavel-to-gavel coverage of both the United States House of Representatives and the Senate to over 42 million homes nationwide via cable television and is carried by most cable systems in California.

- Public television stations in three-fourths of the states produce regular news and discussion programs that focus specifically on state government. Six states even provide gavel-to-gavel television coverage of one or both houses of their state legislatures, similar to C-SPAN's coverage on the national level.
- In communities throughout the nation, local government meetings are televised on cable systems. Over 120 California communities cablecast city council and county board of supervisors meetings on municipal access cable channels.

By contrast, Californians see no regular news and analysis programs on public, commercial or cable television that focus on state legislative proceedings and other state government activities. Even news segments on commercial broadcast television news programs have diminished dramatically as one television station after another has closed its Sacramento bureau. Currently, no out-of-town television news bureaus remain in the capital to monitor state government on a daily basis. Californians can now see more television coverage of their local governments and the U.S. Congress than they do of their state Legislature.

During two years of study, the California Channel project has analyzed commercial and public television coverage of California state government. It has interviewed government leaders, political analysts, public and commercial broadcast television news directors and reporters, cable operators and educators. And it has examined the precedents set by other states, municipalities and countries in televising government proceedings. The study has concluded that a statewide public affairs television channel for California is desirable—indeed, necessary.

### **A. The California Legislature: Governing a State of Extremes**

To describe California is invariably to engage in extremes. The most populous state in the nation at 28 million residents, California is a major economic power with a diverse, resilient and growing economy. If California were a sovereign nation, it would be the world's sixth largest economic power, exceeding even Britain and Italy in gross national product.<sup>1</sup> Strategically located on the Pacific Rim, California is expected to continue its economic growth well into the twenty-first century.

In addition to producing and exporting a dazzling array of goods and services, California is the birthplace of numerous social movements, scientific advances, government reforms and educational innovations. The state's influence on the national and world scenes ranges from the "high-tech" inventions of the Silicon Valley to the "high-touch" values of the human potential movement. Its movie, television and music industries reach into every corner of the world, making California a dominant purveyor of popular culture. Within its borders, major forces for social and economic change fostered the free speech movement of the 1960s, the tax revolt of the 1970s and the microcomputer revolution of the 1970s and 1980s.

California's leading-edge status is also evident in the growing social and economic problems it confronts, some of which foretell dilemmas facing other parts of the country. With a growing lower class, shrinking middle class and small but increasingly powerful upper class, California is becoming a two-tier society.<sup>2</sup> As a melting pot for the burgeoning number of refugees from Southeast Asia and Latin America, California's social service and educational institutions are stretched to the limit. The rapid growth that has fueled California's economic vitality has also spawned air and water pollution, urban sprawl, clogged transportation arteries, the loss of farm and coast lands, unmanageable solid waste disposal systems, overcrowded schools and unaffordable housing.

Positioned at the hub of all these issues is the California Legislature. "Everything that happens in California winds up in the state Legislature," notes veteran political analyst Robert Fairbanks, former editor of the *California Journal*. "Sacramento has become more influential over all Californians than ever before and the trend is continuing" as the federal government decentralizes its services.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the California Legislature has been a trend-setting institution—the first state legislature to meet on a full-time basis. Legislative reforms instituted in 1966 by the late Jesse Unruh (then, speaker of the Assembly) have since been emulated by other states: longer sessions, increased legislative salaries and a larger and more professional legislative staffs.<sup>4</sup>

The California legislative process is also unique in the extent to which the electorate is directly involved in lawmaking. California regularly considers more ballot initiatives than any state in the nation. The November 1988 ballot contained 29 initiatives ranging from insurance reform and tobacco industry taxation to the funding of transportation and education programs. The Legislature sponsored 17 of these measures: nine bond issues and eight constitutional amendments. Voters in some municipalities faced an even longer slate of ballot measures. In San Francisco, 54 state and local measures appeared on the ballot.

The Legislature considers more than 7,000 bills in each two-year session. During the 1989 legislative session, it passed a nearly \$50 billion budget to fund California's extensive state services. In session over 250 days per year, the Legislature's policy agenda is broad, reflecting the state's dynamic population and economy. California's highly regulatory government is involved in air and water quality, transportation, education, equal employment, labor relations, insurance, health, safety and a long list of other issues.

The activities of California's powerful Legislature are virtually invisible to Californians, however. Both structural reasons and the nature of Capitol media coverage play a part in keeping the Legislature hidden behind closed doors.

## **B. Structural Isolation of the California Legislature**

The California Legislature operates in relative isolation from the attention of the average citizen. The reasons are inherent in California's enormous size, its unusually large legislative districts, its officeholders' power to reapportion districts into safe electoral seats, the insulating effect of campaign contributions

on the electoral process and the extraordinarily high reelection ratios of incumbents. The consequences can be seen in the public's ignorance of state government, hostility toward elected officials and low rates of electoral participation.

California's sheer size significantly isolates state government from its citizens. As the third largest state in geographic size (following Alaska and Texas) and the largest in population, California spans 800 miles from north to south. Sacramento, the state capital, is considerably removed from the larger population centers of the state—two hours driving time from San Francisco, eight hours from Los Angeles and over ten hours from San Diego.

One consequence of Sacramento's remote location is that few Californians feel that their elected representatives in Sacramento are accessible. Few visit the state capital or converse regularly with their elected representatives. Most cannot name their own state assemblymember or senator. Californians are thus dependent on the mass media for information and analysis of state government proceedings—information which is in short supply. (See Chapter 2, "Media Neglect.")

California also has the most populous legislative districts in the country. According to the 1980 national population census, California's 80 Assembly districts each contain 309,000 people (and by 1990 many will undoubtedly be larger). By contrast, New York, the second most populous state, has Assembly districts one-third the size of California's with an average of 117,700 people per district. Vermont and New Hampshire, among the least populous states, have approximately 3,400 and 2,400 people, respectively, in their legislative districts.

The same comparisons hold for California's state Senate districts, also the country's largest. California's 40 Senate districts (618,100 people) are larger than the state's Congressional districts (549,000 people). By comparison, New York has 61 districts for its upper house, and each contains less than half the population of California's.<sup>5</sup>

If California wanted to reduce the size of its Assembly districts to make its elected representatives more accessible to voters, it would have to create over 230 more districts to match the district populations of New York's lower house and 11,000 to match New Hampshire's.

Reapportionment has erected another barrier between elected representatives and voters. Once a decade, following the population census, the California state Legislature redraws the lines for each legislative district. Although reapportionment is designed to provide representation for new groups of voters as the population shifts or increases, it enables the majority party (often with the cooperation of the minority party) to draw "safe" legislative districts in which the percentage of Democratic or Republican voters is so pronounced that electoral outcomes are typically a foregone conclusion.

The reapportionment process can reduce interest in elections by substantially eliminating competition for legislative office in "safe" Republican or Democratic districts. Candidates are often picked by party leaders in Sacramento to run in safe districts. Because the designated Republican or Democratic candidates



frequently win, voters for the losing party—and even some voters for the winning party—feel their participation is irrelevant and disengage from politics. By the same process, Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans and members of other minority groups who are not adequately represented in their districts also lack incentive to become involved in the electoral system.

The growing flood of campaign contributions into the coffers of California's political candidates is another factor that distances voters from elected officials. As major contributor groups are seen to have increasing influence over elections and legislation, ordinary citizens withdraw their support. From 1974, when the Political Reform Act first required candidates to disclose their contributions and expenditures, to 1986, campaign spending in state legislative races rose by over 500%—climbing from \$11 million to a record-setting \$57.1 million. In the 1986 election, 12 legislative races each cost over \$1 million, and five exceeded \$2 million. Winners in 1986 open seat races spent approximately \$500,000 each for Assembly seats and \$771,000 for Senate seats.<sup>6</sup>

These enormous sums increasingly come, not from individual citizens, but from organized statewide contributors. Some candidates raise virtually no contributions from individuals in their own districts, yet they still wage multi-million dollar campaigns. Indeed, state legislative candidates now raise over 92% of all their money from sources outside their own districts.

A final factor separating legislators from voters is the high reelection ratio for legislative office. In 1986, not one incumbent in either the primary or the general election was defeated by a challenger—the first time since 1952 that all incumbent legislators seeking reelection won their races. Over the past 10 years, 95% to 98% of all legislative incumbents have been reelected. Because incumbents invariably win their elections, the voters may sense there is little they can do to affect the outcome.<sup>7</sup>

For many Californians, state government seems omnipresent yet faceless. Government pervasively affects their schools, environment, taxes, health and safety. Yet few can name or recognize their elected representatives. In a state the size of California, the media must serve to connect citizens with their government. Unfortunately, California's media—and, in particular, the electronic media of television and radio—have failed to compensate for the structural factors that distance residents from their elected representatives.

### **C. The Electronic Media's Limited Coverage of California State Government**

America is a nation of television watchers. In the average household, the television set is on more than seven hours per day, with the typical adult watching about 33 hours per week. Television viewing consumes more free time than any other leisure activity, eclipsing even socializing and conversing. In fact, Americans spend nearly one-third of their leisure time in front of the television set, more than newspaper reading and all other mass media use combined. Not surprisingly, two-thirds of Americans get most of their news from television, and one-half rely on television for all of their news.<sup>8</sup>

With a majority of the population dependent on television for its news, what are viewers seeing in California? A content analysis of top-rated evening television newscasts in California's five largest media markets shows coverage of California state government proceedings to be minimal at best. Viewers of local evening television news programs learn considerably more about sports, weather, local and national events and the consumer products portrayed in advertisements than they do about actions of the Legislature, the court system, the Governor and executive branch agencies and commissions. State public affairs programming on public television fares little better. Currently none of California's 13 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television stations produces regular programming that focuses on state government. With minimal exposure by both the commercial and public broadcast media, the Legislature is seriously isolated from public scrutiny.

### ***1. Commercial Broadcasting: The Rise and Fall of Capitol Coverage***

Commercial broadcast interest in the state Capitol has waxed and waned over the years. Media coverage was at its height during the Reagan governorship, 1967–1974. These years also coincided with television newscasting coming of age. New technologies emerged that encouraged more live coverage of events. Color television became commonplace, “enlivening the inborn grayness of government.”<sup>9</sup> And local television news rose in popularity as a new breed of producers introduced ratings-boosting formats.

In 1965, two years prior to Ronald Reagan's first year as governor, Governor Edmond G. (“Pat”) Brown (1959–1966) opened up a press conference room for his weekly meetings with reporters. Known as “the Governor's Press Conference Room,” it is still in use today. When Reagan became governor in 1967, he was “hot copy,” according to Spencer Tyler, California Senate Communications Director and former AP Capitol correspondent.<sup>10</sup> The new press conference room was filled to overflowing. As many as 15 cameras were on hand to cover his messages. At that time, a dozen radio and television stations maintained bureaus in Sacramento. The media's interest in state government affairs lasted through the Reagan years and into the first years of the Jerry Brown governorship (1975–1982).

After the Reagan years, the pendulum swung the other way. News staffs were reduced, and the media spent less money on capital correspondents and stringers. Governor Jerry Brown held relatively few press conferences, and the media eventually lost interest in the governorship, paying less attention to the Legislature and other government activities as well.

While newspapers have maintained a strong presence in the capital, television has experienced an exodus of correspondents from Sacramento. Until recently, only one non-Sacramento television station, KRON-TV of San Francisco, had a full-time news bureau in the capital.<sup>11</sup> It shut down its Sacramento operation in October 1988, leaving no out-of-town television news organizations in the capital. Radio reporting has dwindled to only three bureaus. Coverage is supplemented somewhat by the radio news services of the Legislature's party caucuses. They have a long tradition of providing news feeds to radio stations,

large and small, throughout the state. For some radio stations, especially those in rural areas, the caucus services may be their only source of legislative news.

A major reason for television's dwindling interest in state government news lies in the ratings game. The news hour is an advertising sales bonanza for television stations. More viewers means more advertising revenue. In the mid-1970s, "news doctors" convinced station managers that viewers prefer fast-action high visual content news over political coverage.<sup>12</sup> The "happy talk" formula—short story length and high story count—has prevailed since then. "Government is by nature bureaucratic, uninteresting," concludes Harry Fuller, San Francisco KGO-TV news director. "It is people talking."<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, news of state government proceedings does not fit the ratings-boosting profile, and in-depth political reporting has declined.

A further reason for the erosion of state government news coverage over the past decade can be attributed to the diminished accessibility of lawmakers to the media. Reporters used to occupy offices in the Capitol itself, very close to the governor's office and the legislative chambers. They were in frequent and informal contact with legislators. During the Reagan years, reporters were moved to the fourth floor of the Annex portion of the Capitol, still in the building but further removed from the action. When the Capitol was restored in the late 1970s and early 1980s, reporters had to move out altogether and find other quarters. Today the media remain scattered in offices near the Capitol, and the potential for *informal* contact between reporters and legislators has decreased.

The rich and highly competitive news environment of the state as a whole also detracts from electronic media coverage of government proceedings. Within its borders, California contains the major financial centers of the Pacific Rim and the movie capital of the world. In addition, it is host to the typical slate of fast-breaking events such as natural disasters, visiting dignitaries and sensational crimes. News from these sources often takes precedence over state government coverage. Such news is readily available to television, radio and newspaper media from wire services like the Associated Press (AP) and other networks that provide frequent, regular and relatively inexpensive feeds. These services deliver the "whole world" to subscribing stations, a world that includes little news of California state government.

The cumulative result of all these factors is the virtual absence of legislative and other state government news on radio and television newscasts. A content analysis of television and radio news programs conducted by the California Channel project showed that even during the busiest period of the legislative session, news reporting was minimal. The television and radio stations with the largest audiences in the five largest California media markets spent an average of only one minute an hour on legislative topics during the last three weeks of the 1987 legislative session in late August and early September. This translates to only one or two stories per news hour, each about 30 seconds long. In short, commercial broadcast television, which captures the attention of a majority of news seekers, provides an inconsistent and meager look at the Legislature and other state government agencies. (For further discussion, see Chapter 2, "Media Neglect.")

## ***2. Public Broadcasting: A Measurable Decline in State Public Affairs Programming***

Public radio and television stations reach 90% of the California population. Educational, cultural and informational programs are broadcast by 13 public television stations and 21 radio stations—programs produced by the stations themselves, national public broadcasting networks and independent producers.<sup>14</sup>

The legislative programming produced by California public broadcast stations, however, is little improved over commercial broadcasting. Although public television stations once aired a weekly reporters' roundtable program on state government topics, its history was short-lived. Public radio coverage of government proceedings has also fallen by the wayside, although there has recently been renewed interest in state public affairs news coverage.

### ***a. The CPBC: A Defunct Source of Program Funding***

The California Public Broadcasting Commission (CPBC) was created by statute in 1975 to "develop and support statewide policy to encourage orderly growth and development of public broadcasting services responsive to informational, cultural and educational needs of the people of California."<sup>15</sup> A major goal of the CPBC was to "bridge the growing gap between the people and their government by providing in-depth news and public affairs programming at the state and local level . . . and to stimulate public awareness and participation in public affairs by disseminating information on government issues and activities."<sup>16</sup>

Although the CPBC still exists in name, Governor George Deukmejian has vetoed its budget line item every legislative session since 1983. The governor also vetoed a 1984 bill to create an endowment fund for ongoing financial support. California is now one of only two states (along with Texas) which does not provide state funding for public broadcasting. Without funding, the CPBC no longer provides grants for statewide television and radio public affairs programming. As a consequence, no state public affairs television programs are produced for statewide distribution to public broadcast stations.

### ***b. Public Television: A Brief Role in Government Programming***

Public television stations in many states are funded and organized as statewide networks. In contrast, California public television stations are autonomous, aside from their national Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliation. They are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission as community, local or university stations, each with its own budget and programming priorities.

From 1975 to 1983 when the California Public Broadcasting Commission was state-funded, it awarded grants to support statewide programming. For a brief period during the CPBC's heyday, public television stations aired a weekly state government reporters' roundtable, "California Week in Review." Funding ceased in 1983, and with it the incentive by stations to produce such statewide programming.<sup>17</sup>



"California Week in Review" adopted a press corps panelist format similar to PBS "Washington Week in Review." It was produced for statewide distribution by Sacramento public television station KVIE. Panelists discussed different public policy issues each week—among others, the quality of the state Supreme Court, comparable worth for women in the workplace, abortion legislation, Indo-Chinese refugees in California and the need for a bullet train between Los Angeles and San Diego.

"Cal Week" had a short existence on California public television stations, two-and-one-half years from 1980 to 1983. Prior to the curtailment of CPBC funding, the managers of California's [then] 12 public television stations replaced it with monthly documentaries on public affairs topics. They believed "Cal Week" was not drawing enough viewers and that a different format would provide a more effective approach for statewide programming.

Station managers cited low viewer appeal as the major reason for the demise of "Cal Week" and their subsequent lack of interest in producing similar programming. They claimed that few Californians actually watched "Cal Week." Ned Katzman, programming director for KQED public television in San Francisco, attributed the demise of "Cal Week" to a lack of interest in state politics outside of the Sacramento area. Former program producer Phil Samuels surmised that the show's potential viewers were unfamiliar with the issues covered and therefore less interested. In contrast, he explained, PBS "Washington Week in Review" viewers have already been exposed to the *national* issues discussed each week through network newscasts. Their interest has been primed enough to want more in-depth information. But because of the small amount of news reaching the California public on *state* government issues, viewers are uninformed and, according to Samuels, not likely to want to tune in to a "Cal Week."<sup>18</sup>

Even though KVIE has indicated an interest in producing another regular program on state government issues, it cites funding as its major barrier. Without a supplemental source of funding, which the CPBC once provided, KVIE and the other public television stations in California have little means or incentive to produce such programming for statewide distribution.

### ***c. Public Radio: Renewed Interest in State Public Affairs Programming***

California Public Radio (CPR) was most active as a statewide network when the California Public Broadcasting Commission was fully operational and providing funding for statewide programming. CPR produced a regular program, "Sacramento Update," as well as daily news feeds from the capital which contained primarily government affairs news. Its programming also included weekly documentaries, news specials, Spanish language news feeds and arts and humanities programs. CPR programming evolved into daily 15-minute live news programs, uplinked from the State Production Center in San Francisco to other public radio stations in California. CPR had bureaus in Sacramento and San Francisco. A newly constructed bureau in Los Angeles was acquired by National Public Radio (NPR) in 1983 when CPBC funding was curtailed.

Today California Public Radio exists as a membership organization only. Because of the absence of CPBC funding, it no longer operates as a network or funds statewide programming. Sacramento public radio station KXPR provides a daily capital news feed to any public radio station which wishes to use it. Currently about six stations out of California's 21 public radio stations regularly take advantage of the service.<sup>19</sup>

A new public radio service, CALNET, was launched in November 1988. Funded by foundation contributions and produced by KLON public radio in Long Beach, CALNET has bureaus in Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Initially, it aired a daily half-hour news magazine similar to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." From a base of a half dozen California public radio stations, CALNET expects eventually to be aired by as many as 18 stations, all receiving the programming by satellite transmission. In 1989 it added "Marketplace," a daily half-hour business program. Gradually, CALNET plans to expand to include election night coverage and other special events in the western states and the Pacific Rim.<sup>20</sup>

In summary, California's electronic media coverage of legislative and other state government proceedings is limited to occasional television and radio news clips. While the broadcast media exerted a strong presence in the capital during the 1960s and 1970s, all out-of-town television news bureaus have since departed, and only a handful of radio reporters remain. Public television's role in airing Sacramento news and analysis has also declined. "California Week in Review," a press corps commentary program, left the air after less than three years. Funding for the California Public Broadcasting Commission was curtailed in 1983, depriving public television stations of an incentive to produce programs on state political issues for statewide distribution. Public radio coverage of state government has also decreased due to lack of funding. The 1988 creation of CALNET, with its emphasis on news and analysis of statewide public policy issues, has been the only exception to this trend. For all practical purposes, Californians receive little news of their state government from commercial and public television and radio stations, and even less in-depth analysis of public policy issues.

#### **D. Consequences of Legislative Isolation**

The foundation of an effective democracy is an informed and motivated citizenry. In California, factors inherent in the structure of state government have combined with inadequate media coverage to leave the electorate "turned off" and uninformed. Most Californians are ignorant of state government proceedings. At the same time, they lack confidence in their elected officials. Because many races for statewide office are noncompetitive, persons eligible to vote lack interest in casting their ballots at the polls. Individual citizens have taken a back seat to special interest groups in the process of shaping legislation and influencing public policy, both in terms of campaign contributions and direct contacts with legislators.

Californians' apathy and disregard for the political process are reflected at the polls where the rate of voter participation is less than the national average.



California ranked forty-first among the states in voting age population casting ballots for the 1984 presidential election, with only 50% of its eligible voters going to the polls. In contrast, 68% of the voting age population in Minnesota, the top-ranked state, cast ballots that year.<sup>21</sup> The 1988 Presidential election attracted 47% of California's voting age population, ranking thirty-eighth among the states.<sup>22</sup>

The relative inactivity of California voters is matched by their low esteem for elected officials. A 1984 poll conducted by the Mervin Field Institute found that 64% of Californians agreed that the Legislature "does not inspire public trust and confidence," and 61% felt it "does not get much accomplished." By contrast, only 10% of respondents said they have "a lot of confidence in the Legislature."<sup>23</sup> In another survey, Californians ranked the Legislature twenty-third out of 34 institutions. It joined the U.S. Postal Service and the CIA in receiving more negative than positive appraisals. The U.S. Senate, House of Representatives and Supreme Court were ranked far more positively.<sup>24</sup>

With the 1988 FBI "sting" of several legislators and their staff members for allegedly receiving payments to sponsor special interest legislation, public confidence in the Legislature has eroded even further. A *Los Angeles Times* exit poll conducted during the November 1988 general election found that California voters agreed, five to one, that "campaign contributions from special interest groups are corrupting the Legislature."<sup>25</sup>

While these factors are not particularly unique to California, they are exacerbated by the sheer power and size of the state. The need to inform large segments of the populace concerning the many challenges facing California has never been greater. The flow of information reaching citizens about public policy issues must be increased if Californians are to engage themselves more actively in the political process.

## **E. Conclusions: The Need for Increased Media Coverage of State Public Affairs**

Media coverage of the California Legislature and other state government activities ranks among the poorest in the nation. The scant attention given legislative proceedings, particularly by existing commercial and public television stations, indicates a need for improved television coverage. But two questions emerge. What kind of a television service would best meet the needs of Californians? And would Californians be interested enough in state government proceedings to watch?

### **1. *The Potential Viewers: Californians' Opinions About a New Public Affairs Television Channel***

A public opinion poll conducted during November and December of 1987 queried a random sample of Californians about the proposed development of a public affairs television channel devoted to state government proceedings and public policy issues. Over half of the respondents stated they were dissatisfied with their current sources of news of California government and its elected officials. Nearly three-fourths expressed interest in the creation of a new channel

that would cover Assembly and Senate sessions, committee hearings and press conferences, together with in-depth news and talk shows on policy issues.

Half the respondents said they would watch the channel's programming once a week, with an additional 15% interested enough to watch it on a daily basis. If the channel were to be distributed by cable television systems, one-fourth of the respondents who did not subscribe to cable said they would be more likely to subscribe if the new public affairs channel were available. (For further discussion, see Chapter 6, "Programming," and Appendix B.)

Individuals who participated in focus groups held by the California Channel project also said they felt uninformed about state government. Although focus group participants gave high marks to several sources of national news, they rated state-level news as inadequate. "Why is the state so secondary?" asked a participant in the Bay Area. "Second page, third page—never on the first." A southern California participant observed, "In Los Angeles, we get as good news coverage as there is in the world. But not enough of it is state focused. That's the one place where we're lacking." (See Chapter 6 and Appendix C.)

Project staff interviewed over 100 representatives of broadcast and public television, newspapers, the cable industry, educational institutions, the Legislature and other government offices about the proposed public affairs television channel. While opinions varied on the best way to launch a new public affairs television channel, virtually all saw the need for improved media coverage of the Legislature and other state government activities. Their responses, summarized here, are discussed in more depth in Chapters 7 and 8.

Broadcasters representing both commercial and public television stations were frank about their own lack of coverage of state government. Said one Los Angeles television reporter, "We don't have staff in Sacramento, which I think is deplorable." Many said they would use footage from the proposed channel to bolster their own coverage of state government, depending, of course, on cost and ease of access. Even though the state's major newspapers are well-represented in Sacramento, reporters saw the proposed television service as a useful tool to supplement existing news-gathering techniques. In particular, they recognized its value for smaller newspaper operations throughout the state that do not maintain capital offices.

Most cable operators interviewed for the study saw the proposed channel as an important public service and agreed that cable is an appropriate means to distribute a new public affairs television channel to viewers. They noted that, while California cable systems televise both municipal and Congressional legislative proceedings, there is no similar coverage of state government proceedings. Observed cable operator Bill Cullen of United Cable in Los Angeles, "State politics gets lost somewhere between issues of local traffic and nuclear war."<sup>26</sup> At the same time, cable operators expressed concern about the shortage of vacant "shelf space" to carry the proposed channel on a full-time basis and suggested partial-day carriage as a solution to the problem. (See Chapter 7, "Cable Distribution.")

Educators were uniformly enthusiastic about the California Channel's potential for bringing the legislative process into the classroom. They saw its

programming applicable from elementary grades to the college level for courses in civics, political science, social studies, speech and debate, with specific college-level applications in urban planning, journalism, environmental studies and law.

State and local government officials, acutely aware of the consequences of inadequate media coverage, also supported the concept of a state public affairs television channel. Many have learned of the positive effects of televising government proceedings from C-SPAN, other state legislatures and municipal governments.

## ***2. What a State Public Affairs Television Channel Would Look Like***

This study proposes the development of a public affairs network, called the California Channel, that would focus on the Legislature and other state and local government proceedings. There are many ways a new public affairs channel could be delivered to the public—among them, commercial and public broadcast television, cable television, direct-to-home satellite systems and microwave.

This study recommends cable television as the primary means for distributing the California Channel for several reasons. First, cable television is a multiple-channel medium. In contrast to single-channel broadcast television stations, cable is capable of transmitting many channels encompassing a wide variety of programming alternatives. While some cable channels are dedicated to broad appeal entertainment-oriented fare, others present special purpose programming like the proposed California Channel. Second, with the exception of broadcast television, cable is accessible to more California households than any other means of video transmission (such as direct satellite delivery and microwave services). Cable systems pass at least 70% of California households. Over half of the state's households subscribe to cable, and the number is growing. Third, cable has set a strong precedent for covering legislative proceedings on the national, state and local levels of government—from C-SPAN's coverage of the U.S. Congress, to the growing number of states which cablecast legislative proceedings, to the thousands of municipalities throughout the nation which televise city and county council meetings on municipal access cable television channels.

Although, ideally, the California Channel would be distributed via cable systems on a full-time dedicated channel, limited capacity on many systems would probably restrict it initially to partial-day cablecasting. The network's legislative programming would be similar in scope to C-SPAN which covers U.S. House and Senate floor sessions and some committee meetings on a gavel-to-gavel basis. Remote-control cameras, installed in the legislative chambers and committee rooms and operated by the Legislature, would capture floor debates and committee hearings.

The Legislature would be responsible for both operating and funding its own video operation. Its video signals would be transmitted to the California Channel's nearby production facility. The California Channel, an independent nonprofit corporation, would combine all programming into a daily transmission

and deliver it by satellite to cable systems and others interested in receiving the signal, such as educational institutions and rural residents not wired for cable.

Like C-SPAN, the California Channel would also produce programming of its own to supplement the Legislature's gavel-to-gavel proceedings—news summaries, interview and call-in programs, issue-specific documentaries and coverage of public affairs-related conferences and speeches. It would branch out further into state government by televising selected hearings of executive branch agencies and commissions as well as oral arguments before the state's Supreme Court. And it would cablecast selected city council and county board of supervisors meetings of interest to a statewide audience.

The California Channel would be a nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of a broad base of interests. By avoiding any direct affiliation with the Legislature, an executive branch agency or the university system, the California Channel's legal and administrative structure would ensure well-balanced and impartial coverage of government proceedings.

The remaining chapters analyze in more depth the nature of current media coverage of the Legislature and the precedents set for legislative television programming by C-SPAN, other states and parliamentary systems. The report charts the course necessary to launch the California Channel as a new statewide public affairs television network. It discusses the alternative means of distributing the new channel to the public and explains why cable is the best choice at this time. The report describes the wealth of programming opportunities available to the California Channel and provides sample program schedules. It outlines technical configurations and system costs, suggests legal and administrative structures and, finally, proposes funding and implementation strategies.

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Steinberg reports the allocation of leisure time activity as follows:
 

TV viewing	31%	Outdoors, sports, cultural,	5%
Socializing and conversing	27%	entertainment	
Newspaper reading	8%	Religion and organizations	5%
All other mass media use	6%	Study	4%
Leisure travel	6%	Resting	3%
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## **Chapter 2**

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# **A Portrait of Neglect: Television's Inadequate News Coverage of State Government**

Californians learn shockingly little of their state government from the news media. Those who are substantially dependent on local television or radio for daily information live in virtual ignorance about state political affairs. This is the fundamental conclusion of a comprehensive study analyzing electronic and print media coverage of California state government.

The media content study monitored top-rated television news programs in five markets—Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento and Fresno, representing approximately two-thirds of the state's population—during the busy closing weeks of California's 1987 legislative session. The study also examined the highest rated radio newscasts and major daily newspapers in the same five markets.

According to the study, the most highly watched television news programs in these markets devoted only 1.7% of their coverage to legislative issues, and radio only 1.9%. Both ignored many important developments altogether, and neither left any time for in-depth information or analysis. Put another way, the highest-watched major market television and radio stations on average devoted less than one minute per hour to state legislative issues during the most active legislative

season of the year. It seems safe to assume that even this minimal amount of coverage is a high-water mark, and that broadcast stations cover even less at other times of the year. Newspaper coverage, while considerably more substantial, was typically confined to inside pages, often in one- or two-inch summaries about legislative action the previous day. (See Table 2.1.)

The findings of the media content analysis are described in the next two sections. The first section examines the amount of coverage that television, radio and newspapers devoted to legislative issues during the study period. The second section follows the specific bills considered “significant” by legislative staff and tracks how those bills fared in major market news coverage.

### **A. Legislative Media Coverage: No News Is *Not* Good News**

During the last month of California’s legislative session (in 1987, from August 17 to September 11), legislators vote on bills that affect virtually every aspect of life and work in the state. In long days and frenzied activity, they pass bills from committees to the floor, debate them, vote and send hundreds of bills to the governor’s desk for his signature or veto.

Most Californians do not have easy access to information on the Legislature’s activities. Some are privy to information from interest groups that monitor state government and track the Legislature’s activities for their members. These groups mail newsletters that identify bills supportive or harmful to the group’s causes, list the voting records of individual legislators and provide the names of legislators to call or write to garner support for particular actions.<sup>1</sup> A few maintain computer data bases and telephone messaging systems to keep members up to date. During the last weeks of the legislative session, these communications intensify as interest groups inform their members of fast-breaking developments on specific bills.

The majority of Californians are not part of such elaborate information systems, however, and must rely on the state’s major media sources—television, radio and newspapers—for information about key legislative actions. A media study was therefore conducted to assess the adequacy of this information for citizens of the state.

The media study selected eight days during the final three weeks of the 1987 legislative session in August and September to determine what legislative actions were covered.<sup>2</sup> The study chose television, radio and newspaper media in the five largest California markets in northern, central and southern California—Sacramento, San Francisco, Fresno, Los Angeles and San Diego—to determine the extent of their coverage (Table 2.2). Although a comprehensive statewide study was beyond the scope of the project, the media markets chosen include approximately two-thirds of the state’s total population. The five selected daily newspapers alone are delivered to nearly 2.5 million people, almost two-thirds of all morning daily newspapers in circulation.<sup>3</sup>

The study monitored the top-rated early and late evening television news programs and the top-rated late afternoon drive-time all-news radio format programs.<sup>4</sup> It categorized program segments according to the broadcast time devoted to local, state, national and international issues, weather, sports and advertisements. It also scanned morning daily newspapers for state legislative coverage by measuring the column inches devoted to political news. The study analyzed newspapers for the day *after* the eight selected legislative study days to correspond most closely with the prior evening's electronic media news coverage.

**Table 2.1**  
**Highlights of the Media Content Study**

Media study highlights	Media coverage of legislative bills and issues during the study days			
	TV	Radio	Nwsp.	All media
Percent of newscast or newspaper carrying legislative news during study	1.7%	1.9%	2.5%	not applic.
Average amount of of legislative news coverage during study	1 min. per hour newscast	1.1 min. per hour newscast	121 col. inches/ nwsp.	not applic.
Avg. no. of legislative-related stories each day per newscast or newspaper	0.9	1.6	5.9	not applic.
No. of bills covered which were listed by legislative staff as "significant" for study days (total "significant" = 253 from possible 1,681)	15	14	83	83
Other bills and issues covered but not listed as "significant"	6	8	65	70
Total no. of bills and issues covered during study days	21	22	148	153
No. of bills covered in all 5 cities by at least one of the media	0	2	10	10

Findings for the top-rated early and late evening television newscasts, the top-rated late afternoon drive time all-news radio program and the daily morning newspaper in 5 California markets: Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego and San Francisco; monitored for 8 days during the last 3 weeks of the 1987 legislative session: Aug. 26, 27, Sept. 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11.

**Table 2.2**  
**California Media Monitored for Legislative Coverage**

<b>Newspaper morning edition</b>	<b>Television-1 early evening</b>	<b>Television-2 late evening</b>	<b>Radio-AM late afternoon</b>
<i>Fresno Bee</i>	KFSN-30	KSEE-24	KMJ-580
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	KABC-7	KNBC-4	KNX-1070
<i>Sacramento Bee</i>	KCRA-3	KXTV-10	KFBK-1530
<i>San Diego Union</i>	KGTV-10	KFMB-8	KSDO-1130
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	KGO-7	KPIX-5	KGO-810

The analysis of the top-rated early and late evening television and radio newscasts revealed amounts of state legislative coverage as well as other kinds of news. Program segments were coded according to the following categories (see category descriptions in Appendix D):

- local stories
- state stories
- national stories
- international stories
- other (non-locale specific)
- weather
- sports
- advertisements
- program lead-ins

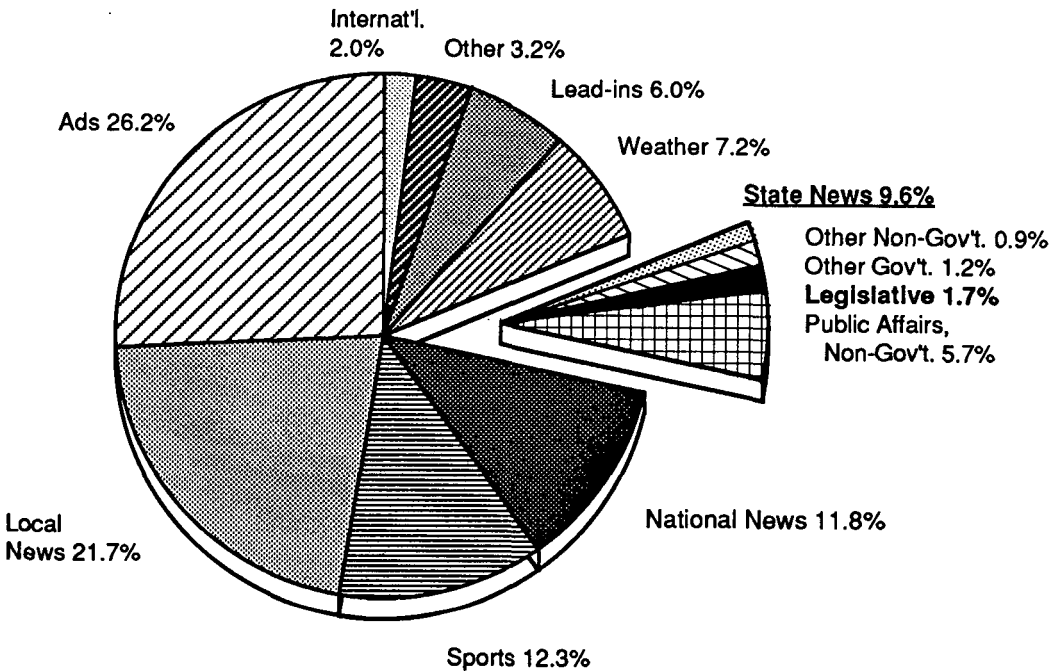
The “state stories” category was further sub-coded into the following categories to determine amounts of media coverage given to various aspects of state government:

- legislative issues (for example, California State Assembly passes parental consent abortion bill);
- other government issues, non-legislative (for example, Food and Agriculture Department studies pet flea spray);
- public affairs issues of interest to the general public, non-government-related (for example, forest fires rage in northern California);
- other—news stories which do not address broad social or public policy issues (for example, a sensational murder indictment that receives statewide coverage).

### **1. Television Coverage**

Although coverage in the five television markets varied, the overall picture shows television news reporting as the glossy, efficient and unemotional recounting of the events of the day—freeway shootings, hotel burnings, pit bull maulings, gruesome murders, political and social scandals as well as conflicts on the national and international scenes. News items were generally followed by sports, weather and non-locale specific reports such as health and consumer

**Table 2.3**  
**Content of Television News Hour**  
**During Eight Study Days in Five California Media Markets**



Category	Percent of news hour	Min.:Sec.
Advertisements	26.2%	15:42
Local issues	21.7%	13:00
Sports	12.3%	7:24
National issues	11.8%	7:06
State issues	9.6%	5:48
Public affairs, non-gov't.	5.7%	3:25
Legislative Issues	1.7%	1:01
Other state government	1.2%	0:43
Other—non-gov't., non-public affairs	0.9%	0:32
Weather	7.2%	4:18
Lead-ins	6.0%	3:36
Other	3.2%	1:54
International issues	2.0%	1:12

Two television newscasts monitored per study day in each market.

issues. News broadcasts offered little, however, about the decisions being made in Sacramento and almost nothing about what lay behind those decisions.

As Table 2.3 shows, television news programs for the eight study days devoted only 1.7% of their coverage to state legislative issues—or 2.3% of total news content, excluding 16 minutes of advertising per hour. Advertisements consumed 26.2% of the news hour and self-promotional lead-ins another 6% (“Coming up in our next hour, a story about the freight train crash in . . .”). Weather (7.2%) and sports (12.3%) took up a combined one-fifth of the news programs. Local news (21.7%) occupied another one-fifth of news programs, followed by news of national (11.8%), state (9.6%) and international (2%) issues.

State stories comprised approximately 10% of the television news hour. Less than two percent of total newscasts focused on legislative matters, and an additional one percent covered other state government activities—for example, rulings of state courts, actions taken by the governor and news of executive branch agencies and commissions. Stories classified as public affairs/non-government-related comprised 6% of the state issues category—for example, the upcoming visit of the Pope to California and the forest fires in the northern part of the state. The category of other non-government state news comprised one percent of the news hour, for example, a grisly chain saw murder in Los Angeles which was featured by media around the state.

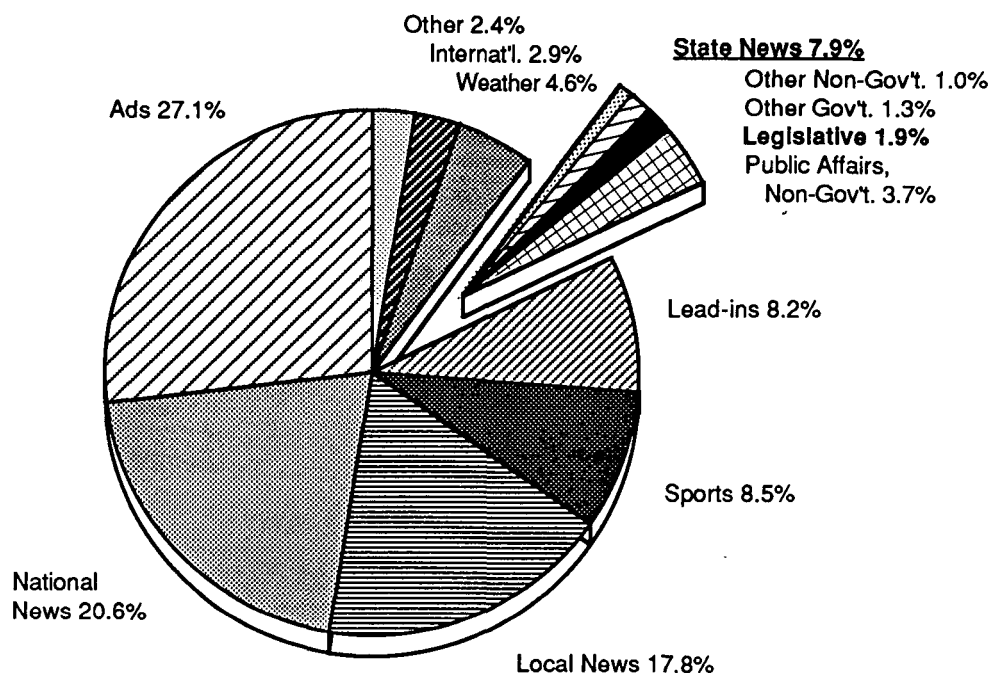
The 1.7% of television news programs devoted to state legislative issues during the eight study days translates into one minute of an hour broadcast and 30 seconds of a half-hour broadcast. Legislative stories ranged in length from 10 seconds to three minutes, with the typical story approximately 50 seconds long.<sup>5</sup> They were often eclipsed by sensational and entertainment oriented features. Two examples:

- The day the Assembly passed the AIDS school education bill, stories on the National Cockroach Contest, the Annual Whistling Contest in Carson City, Nevada, and Jim and Tammy Bakker Halloween masks got nearly two minutes of air time on the Los Angeles KNBC-TV 11 p.m. newscast. The highly controversial AIDS education bill, the sole legislative story of the newscast, was treated in 15 seconds.
- San Francisco’s KGO-TV 5 p.m. newscast highlighted a dog and owner look-alike contest and the theft of a giant Bullwinkle moose balloon on the day legislative committees passed bills on the community college system, insurance industry reform, the supercollider bond measure, an anti-pollution device for automobiles and a ban on liquor licences to clubs practicing sex discrimination. Despite these actions in the Capitol, the newscast presented no legislative stories.<sup>6</sup>

During a time when legislators were working feverishly to meet the midnight deadline of the last day of the session to complete their work, passing bills of major significance to the everyday lives of most Californians, television news viewers of the newscasts monitored for this study were informed of one, or at most, two issues per news program. Since most of the population gets its news from television—66% according to a recent study—Californians are decidedly uninformed about the bulk of the activities of the Legislature.<sup>7</sup>



**Table 2.4**  
**Content of Radio News Hour**  
**During Eight Study Days in Five California Media Markets—**



Category	Percent of news hour	Min.:Sec.
Advertisements	27.1%	16:18
National issues	20.6%	12:24
Local issues	17.8%	10:42
Sports	8.5%	5:06
Lead-ins	8.2%	4:54
State issues	7.9%	4:42
Public affairs, non-gov't.	3.7%	2:13
<b>Legislative Issues</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>1:08</b>
Other state government	1.3%	0:47
Other—non-gov't., non-public affairs	1.0%	0:36
Weather	4.6%	2:48
International issues	2.9%	1:42
Other	2.4%	1:24

One hour-long radio newscast monitored per study day in each market.

## **2. Radio Coverage**

The study also analyzed the top-rated late afternoon drive-time radio newscasts of all-news and news-talk format stations in the five markets using the same categories as television. The overall picture of the typical radio newscast is similar to television. As Table 2.4 illustrates, news of the state Legislature comprised just under 2% of the program (2.5% not including ads), approximately one minute per news hour. Advertisements consumed 27% of the hour and self-promotional lead-ins 8%. Sports and weather took a combined 13% of the typical newscast. National news, at 21%, exceeded local (18%), state (8%) and international (3%) news.

Radio newscasts on the selected all-news stations had similar formats in each of the five cities. The national network provided news for the hour's first five minutes, accounting for the high percentage of national coverage in a typical radio news hour. National news was followed by local and state features, with introductions by station commentators. Fifty minutes of short news and business reports were intermingled every few minutes with advertisements, sports, traffic updates and weather reports. At five minutes before the next hour, the newscast summarized the following hour's stories.

As with television reporting, entertainment oriented stories on radio received more air time than news of the Legislature. For example, on the day when supercollider legislation was passed by the Assembly and sent to the governor in an eleventh hour effort to meet the federal proposal submission deadline, its 50-second report on San Diego's 4 p.m. KSDO radio newscast competed with a combined four minutes on Florida's Two Tail Alligator Festival, a conference on the couch potato syndrome and a man bites police dog story in New York.<sup>8</sup>

Radio news stories tended to be brief, from five seconds to one minute each, even shorter than television stories. The radio report on a legislative bill often consisted solely of a headline, such as this five-second report: "A bill allowing satellite horse race betting was passed by the State Senate today."<sup>9</sup> Reports exceeding one minute were not common; in fact, only two were noted during the entire study period, each two minutes long. The typical legislative story length of 40 seconds allowed little time for analysis. Rarely were more than two legislative issues reported per newscast.

## **3. Newspaper Coverage**

The study analyzed newspapers in the five selected California cities to determine the number and percentage of stories and column inches devoted to state legislative information. (One column inch is one-inch long and two-inches wide.) The morning newspapers for the day *following* the evening news broadcasts were analyzed in order to correspond in content with the television and radio news programs.

Newspaper readers who perused entire issues and read all the state government news, editorials and opinion columns on the eight study days would have consumed an average of 121 column inches of text per day on legislative proceedings and an additional 50 inches on other state government issues.

**Table 2.5**  
**Comparison of Newspaper with Television and Radio Coverage**  
**for One Day in Los Angeles**

<b><i>Los Angeles Times</i></b> <b>Sept. 4, 1987, morning edition</b>	<b>KABC TV</b> <b>Sept. 3,</b> <b>6–7 p.m.</b>	<b>KNX Radio</b> <b>Sept. 3,</b> <b>4–5 p.m.</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State income tax reform accord near (29")</li> <li>2. Governor signs supercollider legislation (50")</li> <li>3. Assembly ratifies payment to teacher in discrimination case (7")</li> <li>4. Aid to low income families with children (18")</li> <li>5. Letters—AIDS education (19")</li> <li>6. Letters—taxing social security benefits (12")</li> <li>7. Editorial on air pollution control devices (22")</li> <li>    <b>"Sacramento File" bill status reports (17", or approximately 1" per bill):</b></li> <li>8. Public school building safety</li> <li>9. Occupational carcinogen control</li> <li>10. Anti-smog transportation control</li> <li>11. South coast air quality</li> <li>12. Restroom equity</li> <li>13. Illegal dog fighting</li> <li>14. Street gang control</li> <li>15–16. Freeway violence (2 bills)</li> <li>17. AIDS testing for marriage license applicants</li> <li>18. Supercollider</li> <li>19. Tax reform</li> <li>20. Emission control in cars</li> <li>21. Transportation tax bill</li> <li>22. Smoking ban on intra-state public transportation</li> <li>23. AIDS prevention education in schools</li> </ol> <p><b>Total column inches = 174"</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Editorial on tax reform, property tax amendment (50 sec.)</li> </ol> <p><b>Total time=50 sec.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Los Angeles county transportation reorganization bill (35 sec.)</li> </ol> <p><b>Total time=35 sec.</b></p>

Assuming that one column inch takes approximately 12 seconds to read aloud in typical anchorperson fashion, the faithful newspaper reader would have obtained the equivalent of a 24-minute news broadcast on state legislative news alone, without the interruption of advertisements.

To be sure, it is not entirely fair to compare the press and the electronic media in this fashion. Newspaper readers do not consume the entire product but pick and choose what they want to read, typically about 10% of each newspaper. In this sense, broadcast audiences may receive more legislative news than newspaper readers who skip this subject altogether. The audio and visual aspects of television news also add informational content to newscasts over and above the script. Finally, one may be comparing “apples and oranges” to place the content of newspapers—space, measured in inches—alongside that of the electronic media—time, measured in minutes and seconds.

Nonetheless, newspapers in general covered a greater number and wider diversity of legislative issues than either of the electronic media. The typical daily newspaper contained approximately six legislative stories, compared with one or two for television and radio newscasts. Table 2.5, for example, compares newspaper legislative coverage with television and radio for Los Angeles on September 3, 1987, a week before the close of the session. The *Los Angeles Times* covered 23 bills compared to one each for the selected television and radio news broadcasts. (The morning newspaper for the *following* day is listed to correspond with the late afternoon and evening broadcasts.)

Newspapers generally covered legislative stories in more depth than television and radio. A daily dose of 121 column inches of state legislative news provides a significant amount of analysis compared with one 40- to 50-second radio or television report. Nonetheless, legislative-related content in the newspapers analyzed during the eight-day study amounted to only 2.5% of the newspapers’ total text, not including advertising. (Newspapers generally devote 60% of their space to advertising and 40% to news.) With the exception of a handful of major issues, newspapers treated little legislative news as front page fare.<sup>10</sup>

The typical report on a bill was 11 column inches, with reports ranging in length from one-half inch to 85 inches. A significant amount of bill coverage was in the form of one- to two-inch summaries on each bill. In fact, nearly one-third of the reports on bills were two column inches or fewer. Two newspapers, the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Los Angeles Times*, provide regular updates of legislative action which list up to 20 bills in one-inch summaries of each. These newspapers offered the most coverage of legislative issues of the five newspapers analyzed.

#### **4. Legislative Coverage by City**

Coverage of legislative issues varied widely from city to city during the eight days that were monitored. The study noted virtually no consistent coverage of legislative news reaching all five markets, especially for television and radio—

**Table 2.6**  
**Average Amount of Legislative News on Eight Study Days**  
**for Selected Television and Radio News Programs**

Media		Legislative coverage			
	Progr. length (min.)	Avg. min. legislative news per	Avg. no. legislative stories per program	Percent total program	Percent total news minus ads *
<b>Television</b>					
<b>Early evening</b>					
Sacramento, KCRA-3	60	2.8	1.6	4.7%	6.4%
Los Angeles, KABC-7	60	1.3	1.3	2.2%	3.0%
San Diego, KGTV-10	60	1.0	0.6	1.7%	2.3%
San Francisco, KGO-7	60	0.7	0.8	1.2%	1.6%
Fresno, KFSN-30	30	0.2	0.3	0.7%	0.9%
<b>Avg. early eve. news</b>		<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>Late evening</b>					
San Francisco, KPIX-5	30	0.8	0.6	2.7%	3.6%
Sacramento, KXTV-10	30	0.6	0.7	2.0%	2.7%
Los Angeles, KNBC-4	30	0.4	0.5	1.3%	1.8%
San Diego, KFMB-8	30	0.1	0.3	0.3%	0.5%
Fresno, KSEE-24	30	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Avg. late eve. news</b>		<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Avg. all TV news per one-hour newscast</b>		<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Radio</b>					
<b>Late afternoon drive-time (AM stations)</b>					
San Francisco, KG0-810	60	1.7	2.0	2.8%	3.9%
Fresno, KMJ-530	60	1.3	2.0	2.2%	3.0%
Sacramento, KFBK-1530	60	1.0	1.4	1.7%	2.3%
San Diego, KSDD-1130	60	0.9	1.6	1.5%	2.1%
Los Angeles, KNX-1070	60	0.6	0.8	1.0%	1.4%
<b>Avg. radio news</b>		<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

\* Advertisements consume 26–27% of the broadcast news hour, or approximately 16 minutes. The amount of news minus ads in an hour broadcast is about 44 minutes.

a strong indication of the absence of statewide legislative news coverage. Rankings from top to bottom for each market are indicated in Tables 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8. Sacramento media consistently ranked first or second in amounts of legislative coverage for all media except radio.

The devoted news seeker in each of the five cities who had listened to the top-rated late afternoon drive-time radio newscast as well as the top-rated early and late evening local television news programs on the study days would have obtained the amounts of legislative news indicated in Table 2.7 below. The combined Sacramento electronic media ranked first in coverage while the media market farthest from the capital, San Diego, and the smallest media market studied, Fresno, ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

All radio newscasts monitored were one hour in length. Early evening television news programs were each one hour in length with the exception of Fresno which was 30 minutes. All late evening television newscasts were one-half hour.

**Table 2.7**  
**Combined Electronic Media:**  
**Average Daily Time Devoted to Legislative News**

Market areas	Combined television and radio			
	Total news time monitored per day	Amounts of legislative news for study days		
		Avg. min./day	Percent total time	Avg. no. stories/day
Sacramento	2-1/2 hrs.	4.4	2.9%	4.6
San Francisco	2-1/2 hrs.	3.1	2.1%	3.4
Los Angeles	2-1/2 hrs.	2.3	1.5%	2.5
San Diego	2-1/2 hrs.	1.9	1.3%	2.4
Fresno	2 hrs.	1.4	1.2%	2.3
<b>Avg. all media</b>		<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>3.0</b>

Two television news programs and one radio program per city per day of study.

Even though newspapers provided appreciably more legislative reporting than either television or radio, coverage varied dramatically by market. Los Angeles and Sacramento newspapers provided the broadest and most extensive coverage of all media analyzed, each devoting over 150 column inches and at least seven stories daily to legislative news. The *San Francisco Chronicle* provided the least amount of coverage, both in column inches and numbers of stories per day—an average of 54 inches and fewer than three stories per day.



**Table 2.8**  
**Newspaper Coverage of Legislative Issues Per Study Day**

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Avg. daily column inches legisl. news</b>	<b>Percent total news minus ads</b>	<b>Avg. number legisl. stories per day</b>
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	192"	3.0%	8.3
<i>Sacramento Bee</i>	155"	3.4%	7.1
<i>San Diego Union</i>	117"	2.4%	5.3
<i>Fresno Bee</i>	88"	2.4%	5.8
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	54"	1.1%	2.9
<b>Avg. all newspapers</b>	<b>121"</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>5.9</b>

## **B. Specific Coverage of "Significant" Legislative Bills**

The first half of the media study, described above, analyzed the overall amount of general legislative coverage provided by the major media in five California markets during the final three weeks of the 1987 legislative session. The second half of the media analysis identified "significant" bills acted upon by the Legislature during the study dates and then determined which of those bills were actually reported in the media.

Legislative bills are not the sole focus of media attention, however. Reporters also cover non-bill related issues such as partisan power struggles, the influence of lobbyists and interest groups, scandals involving legislators and the legislative process in general. Although the study monitored such issues, bill-related coverage provided the focus of analysis. The process of drafting bills, debating them and bringing them to final vote is the essential "business" of the Legislature. As such, the study considered media coverage of specific bills to be an indicator of overall legislative coverage.

### **1. Identification of Significant Legislation**

The study charted legislative action for the final three weeks of the 1987 legislative session by consulting the "weekly histories" of the Assembly and Senate as well as computer data base printouts provided by both the Assembly Office of Research and Legi-Tech, a private bill monitoring service that tracks legislation for subscribers.<sup>11</sup>

In all, legislators acted on 1,681 bills in committee and/or floor proceedings during the final three weeks of the session. Information on the most significant issues was obtained by contacting each of the legislative committee offices as well as other legislative leaders' offices. Committee staff (called consultants) and other legislative aides identified the major bills and issues which were acted upon either in committee or on the floor during the final weeks of the session.

Legislative staff were asked to identify the most significant bills according to three criteria: bills that were controversial—which, for example, may have

elicited a great deal of partisan debate; bills that would have a major impact on the state as a whole; and bills which would affect a large percentage of the population—in other words, issues of enough importance to warrant the public's attention.

Of the 74 committees contacted, 62 consultants and aides provided information on their assessment of significant legislation. The study compared their list of over 300 significant bills with the printouts on legislative action to verify that they received some action during the study days. The list was further checked against the *1987 Digest of Significant Legislation*, a year-end review compiled by the Senate Rules Committee.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Significant Legislation Covered by the Media**

The list of those significant bills acted upon during the study days, 253 in all, was then compared with the selected print and broadcast media coverage for those dates to determine which had received attention. Of these, the combined coverage for all television stations was 15 bills. Total radio coverage was 14 bills. Newspapers provided the most coverage with a total of 83 bills. No coverage in any medium on the study days was given to the remaining 170 significant bills.

Only 10 bills were covered in each of the five markets, primarily by newspapers. Considering the scope of the work of the Legislature during the final weeks of the session and its far-ranging impact, the following are the only issues that reached all five markets during the study days—for all practical purposes, a statewide audience. And only those who regularly read the newspaper would have been informed of these issues on the study days (listed in order of amount of coverage):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Income tax reform                                | 6. Minimum wage increase                |
| 2. Supercollider-related bills                      | 7. AIDS prevention education in schools |
| 3. Tax rebate                                       | 8. Beer beverage distribution           |
| 4. Parental consent for teen abortions              | 9. Freeway violence bills               |
| 5. Smoking ban on intra-state public transportation | 10. Insurance reform                    |

Of the 83 significant bills covered by newspapers during the study days, few received extensive analysis. Half of them (40 bills) received 15 or fewer column inches of combined coverage across all five newspapers for the eight-day period. And half of these (20 bills) had a total combined coverage of two column inches or fewer. Only 10 issues received more than a total combined coverage of 100 column inches from the five newspapers over the eight study days. Top legislative news reporting was provided by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Sacramento Bee* newspapers, both of which carry a regular legislative action column describing bills in summaries of one to two column inches each.

The number of bills identified as significant by legislative staff is listed in Table 2.9 by category, followed by the type of media coverage they received.

**Table 2.9**  
**Media Coverage of Significant Legislation**

Number of bills identified as "significant" by legislative staff for the 8 study dates		Number of bills covered by media per category in all 5 study markets			
Category (1)	No. listed "significant"	TV	Radio	Nwsp.	All media (2)
Health	34	3	3	11	11
Economic development	32	3	5	8	8
Criminal justice	27	1	0	12	12
Environmental protection	25	0	1	11	11
Human and animal welfare	22	1	1	7	7
Education	19	2	0	10	10
Employment and labor	18	1	1	3	3
Housing	15	0	0	2	2
Tort reform	11	0	0	8	8
Taxation	10	3	1	3	3
Insurance	9	0	0	4	4
Public safety	9	0	0	0	0
Election reform	8	0	0	1	1
Utilities	8	0	0	0	0
Transportation	5	1	2	4	4
Arts	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Percent of Total covered by each media</b>		<b>5.9%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	

(1) Table is ranked by number of bills per category.

(2) Bill coverage by all media is equal to newspaper coverage.

The media covered an additional 70 issues and bills and issues that were not listed by legislative consultants and aides as significant for the eight study days. Television coverage totaled six issues, radio eight and newspapers 65. Some of these issues, while no doubt important to affected individuals and groups, were not considered by legislative staff to be significant issues. Examples are flea market sales tax enforcement, restroom parity, tax exemptions on chicken litter and establishment of a state poison control center. Others had higher human interest appeal than broad-based policy implications: alcoholic beverage service in nudist colonies, humane treatment for entertainment animals and a high speed train to Las Vegas. Others had primarily local relevance: for example, the fate of the Los Angeles Coliseum and an auto sales zone for Folsom.

Additional legislative-related stories covered by the media but not included on legislative consultants' lists were features of general interest to the reading and

viewing public—for example, the everyday life of a lobbyist or legislator and commentaries on the hectic frenzy that characterizes the final days of a session.

The following Table 2.10 shows that newspapers provided the bulk of the coverage for the additional 70 legislative issues that received media coverage during the study days.

**Table 2.10**  
**Media Coverage of Other Legislative Bills and Issues**

Other bills and issues covered by media during study days—not listed as “significant” by legislative staff	Number of bills and issues covered by media			
	TV	Radio	Nwsp.	All media
Non-bill related commentaries	0	1	11	11
Economic development	1	2	8	10
Human and animal welfare	0	2	9	9
Criminal justice	0	0	8	8
Health	0	0	6	6
Election reform	1	0	5	5
Education	2	0	3	5
Transportation	1	2	4	5
Housing	0	0	3	3
Insurance	1	0	2	2
Arts	0	0	2	2
Environmental protection	0	1	2	2
Tort reform	0	0	1	1
Taxation	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>70</b>

Combining the two previous Tables 2.9 and 2.10 shows the scant television and radio coverage of legislative issues compared with newspapers. The media monitored for the study covered a total of 153 legislative bills and issues for the study days in the five California markets. Newspapers covered 148 of these, or 97%; television covered 21, or 14%; and radio reported on 22, or 14%.

A city by city look at media coverage of legislative activities also illustrates the lack of electronic media coverage compared with newspapers (Table 2.11). It underscores the study's finding that legislative issues are not consistently covered statewide (that is, in all five study markets). Only those individuals who regularly read the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Sacramento Bee* would have been informed about a wide range of legislative activities during the final three weeks of the 1987 session.

**Table 2.11**  
**Media Coverage of Bills and Other Legislative Issues by City**  
**for the Selected Media During Study Days**

Market areas	Number of bills and other legislative issues covered by media (n = 153 *)		
	Television	Radio	Newspapers
Fresno	2	11	52
Los Angeles	9	5	76
Sacramento	10	10	58
San Diego	5	8	40
San Francisco	5	7	21

\* The total number of bills and issues covered by all media monitored during the study days was 153.

### **3. Bills Receiving Most Media Coverage**

Table 2.12 lists the 10 bills that were covered most heavily during the study days. It, too, reflects the relatively little legislative coverage by television and radio compared with newspapers and the lack of consistent reporting reaching a statewide audience.

Television and radio news tended to pay more attention to issues with pocketbook and dramatic appeal, like tax rebates, parental consent for teen abortions and the supercollider site competition. While complex in their own right, these issues are more easily summarized into brief and catchy news items than, say, income tax or tort reform measures. "The checks are in the mail," for example, was the lead-in for a television news report on the tax rebate.

Television's top-reported legislative story statewide was California's bid to be the site for the supercollider. With the exception of a four-minute analysis of the supercollider issue by KCRA-TV in Sacramento,<sup>13</sup> however, television and radio reports tended to focus on ancillary issues—the heated and acrimonious debates in the Legislature, the competition with other states and the rush to meet the deadline to submit the proposal to the federal government. With the drama of the "horse race" receiving the most attention, the core issues in the supercollider legislation were frequently downplayed and other complex topics like tort reform were avoided altogether.

### **4. Limited Coverage of Key Issues**

The media bypassed many legislative issues with potentially far-reaching consequences for Californians. Committee consultants ranked tort reform, for example, as one of the most significant issues of the session. The 1987 legislative session dealt with several bills on tort reform affecting liability settlements in a wide range of situations. The major tort reform bill (SB 241) gave qualified



**Table 2.12**  
**Top Ten Bills Receiving the Most Media Coverage**  
**by the Selected Electronic Media and Newspapers**  
**During the Study Days**

Top ten bills	Total combined coverage for 5 cities over 8 study days			No. of cities with coverage		
	TV (min.)	Radio (min.)	Nwsp. (Inches)	TV	Radio	Nwsp
Supercollider-related bills	16.0	4.0	502.5	2	3	5
Tax rebate, Gann surplus measure	11.1	5.8	459.5	4	5	5
Parental consent for teen abortions	6.9	8.5	285.5	4	5	5
Income tax reform	3.7	0	574.0	2	0	5
Minimum wage increase	1.9	2.9	148.0	2	2	5
AIDS prevention education in schools	1.8	3.1	133.5	3	3	5
Los Angeles transportation reorg.	1.8	2.6	171.5	1	1	3
Smoking ban on intra-state transport.	1.0	1.8	212.0	1	3	5
AIDS experimental drug program	0.3	0.7	120.0	1	1	4
Tort reform—product and other liability	0	0	138.5	0	0	4

For television, the time is the combined legislative reporting for two television stations per market, both early and late evening newscasts. The table is ranked by amount of television coverage. The bills listed were determined by combined coverage of all three media.

immunity against personal injury damage suits to manufacturers and sellers of products found to be unsafe. Other tort-related bills involved the liability of health professionals, directors of corporate boards and public entities and officials, including police officers' use of deadly weapons, as well as beach liability cases—in all, more than a dozen bills. While newspapers covered the tort reform issue during the study days, selected television and radio newscasts provided no coverage.

Committee consultants ranked state trial court funding (SB 709 and AB 2640) as another key legislative issue. Under this bill, the state would assume funding of trial courts and additional judgeships would be created. Only newspapers covered these bills during the study days. The monitored television and radio newscasts for the study days provided no coverage.

Bills related to environmental protection, although one of the larger categories of significant legislation, received some newspaper coverage but virtually no coverage by television or radio during the study days. Although

television and radio reported that both San Diego and Los Angeles were placed on the EPA's list of the nation's 10 most dangerously air polluted cities during the study period, they made no mention of related bills in the Legislature for these days—the Clean Air Act, anti-smog transportation controls and emission recovery canisters for automobiles.

Other issues with little coverage by the selected electronic media were the arts, housing, insurance and election reform. Avid newspaper readers would have learned about bills affecting classroom size and community college fees, insurance reform and campaign finance during the study days. Consumers of television and radio news would have learned virtually nothing.

Television and radio cannot be faulted entirely for their overall coverage of public affairs issues. They did offer several features on such public affairs issues as AIDS, the homeless and transportation. However, their coverage provided little to no linkage of these issues with legislative action during the study dates. For example, more than a dozen bills on housing for the homeless were pending before the Legislature during this period, but public affairs features on this topic made little or no reference to legislative actions.

### ***5. Media Coverage of Other State Government Activities***

The Legislature is not the only policy-making body or source of news in the capital. Actions of the executive and judicial branches of state government also have far-reaching impact on residents of the state.

The governor, as head of the executive branch of government, is engaged in a wide range of policy-making activities involving both the Legislature and the many executive branch agencies and commissions. State government agencies release studies, hold hearings, enact policies and revise administrative procedures. In fact, most Californians are probably as affected by state agency activities as they are by legislation—for example, motor vehicle registration requirements, state tax reporting procedures, unemployment and disability compensation and business licensing requirements. State court actions constitute another major body of public policies dealing with a wide range of issues.

Although media coverage of the other two branches of state government was not the study's focus, findings show a very limited amount of state agency and court issues reaching the public. Media coverage of the other two branches of state government *combined* was less than legislative reporting. During the study period, television and radio devoted just over one percent of the broadcast hour to other state government news, or 45 seconds per newscast (Tables 2.3 and 2.4). Newspapers covered an average of 2.5 stories per day in approximately 50 column inches on news of the executive and judicial branches.

Approximately half of the media coverage of other state government issues centered on the governor—his positions on bills, budget and policy battles with Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig, his declaration of a state of emergency to release funds to fight northern California forest fires and his controversial meeting with the Nicaraguan *contras*. In-depth coverage of the governor's actions during the study days, however, was minimal. Out of 29 television news stories in which the governor was mentioned, most contained only

a sentence or two about his actions amid longer stories about the issues themselves—for example, whether or not he was expected to sign a certain bill or his declaration of a state of emergency for fire-ravaged counties. The pattern for radio was similar. Newspapers covered a broader variety of issues involving the governor and generally treated them in more depth than television and radio. However, of 51 governor-related newspaper stories during the study days, approximately two-thirds contained only brief references to his actions or positions.

Media coverage of the governor aside, newspapers provided the majority of coverage of the executive and judicial branches during the eight study days. The five newspapers monitored for the study covered approximately 85 stories of agencies, commissions and courts, not including the governor. The wide variety of stories included Food and Agriculture Department insect spraying campaigns, state employee association contract negotiations, Transportation Department highway construction projects and Supreme Court cases on sexual harassment, the detainment of truant youths and limits on liability settlements. Television and radio covered approximately one-fourth as many news stories of state agencies, commissions and courts as newspapers.

### C. Study Caveats

Although the media content study covered five of the largest media markets in the state, it is important to stress the study's limitations. Logistically, it was beyond the scope of the study to monitor all media throughout the state, even on a random selection basis. The analysis, therefore, included only the top-rated media in the five largest markets of northern, central and southern California. Likewise, rather than choose study days randomly from a 12-month calendar, eight days from the busiest part of the legislative year were selected.

Due to the selective nature of the study, the data collected on media content represent, in a sense, "snapshots" of legislative coverage for given news programs and newspapers on certain days in selected cities. Despite the study's limitations, however, these "snapshots" show that during the busiest and most important part of the Legislature's year, little legislative news reached the public in five major markets comprising approximately two-thirds of the state's population. The selected television and radio newscasts were the top-rated in each market, drawing more viewers or listeners than other news programs at similar times. And the combined circulation for the five daily newspapers represents about two-thirds of all morning daily newspapers in California.<sup>14</sup>

The choice of study dates, confined to the final three weeks of the session, no doubt presented an exaggerated picture of legislative media coverage. Because this is the busiest time of the legislative year, the press and broadcasters may have been *more* likely to cover the Legislature than at other times, possibly leading to *higher* percentages of legislative coverage than if a random sample of study days were selected throughout the calendar year.

In any given period of time, there are usually news stories that dominate. During the study period two events consumed a significant portion of news coverage—forest fires in northern California and the upcoming visit of the Pope to

Los Angeles and the Bay Area. State legislative news had to compete with these other compelling public affairs stories. Also, legislative issues of particular local interest were stressed in some markets and not in others. Bills involving the reorganization of the Los Angeles transportation district and the sale of the L.A. Coliseum got more play in the southern California news media than in other areas. And legislative debate over the fate of the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in Yosemite National Park was bigger news in the Bay Area than the other markets.

Sacramento legislative committee staff determined which bills should be considered "significant," providing the standard for judging media coverage. It can be argued that one person's "significant" bill, however, is another's candidate for former U.S. Senator William Proxmire's Golden Fleece Award. Would everyone consider charter boat safety more significant than restroom equity requirements? Perhaps not. As subject specialists, however, committee staff are familiar with the entire gamut of bills in their subject areas and are well versed in the backgrounds and histories of each bill. For this study, they were considered the best source of information on key bills.

Legislative action during the final weeks of the session occurs so fast and furiously that it would take reporters with the physical and mental constitution of a Robocop to cover it all. In light of the high volume of activity, reporters may be at least partially excused if they fail to cover all significant issues. (Of course, a major reason for limited coverage is the absence of television news bureaus in the capital.) What is noteworthy and more important for the purpose of this report, however, is the nature of that reporting—limited in-depth analysis, the absence of television and radio coverage for all but a dozen issues and the tendency to leave complex issues untouched or highly simplified.

## D. Conclusions

The foregoing media analysis illustrates that the amount of legislative news reaching the California public in five major markets through television, radio and newspapers is severely limited. Out of 1,681 bills that were acted upon during the final weeks of the 1987 session—253 of which were identified as "significant" by legislative committee consultants—television newscasts covered only 15 bills, radio 14 and newspapers 83.

The media, and primarily newspapers, covered an additional 70 issues not listed as significant. Out of a total of 153 such bills and non-bill-related legislative issues covered by the media in the five market areas, television reported on 21 and radio 22. Newspapers provided the broadest legislative coverage by reporting on 148 bills and issues. "Statewide" coverage (legislation reported in all five cities of the study) was afforded only 10 bills, primarily by newspapers.

A number of factors contribute to this portrait of neglect:

*Absence of capital news bureaus.* The economics and format of broadcast news, television in particular, serve to neglect legislative reporting. Because of the expense, few stations choose to send correspondents to Sacramento or to maintain capital news bureaus. In fact, until October 1988 only one California television station—KRON-TV in San Francisco—maintained a full-time Sacramento



bureau. It has since closed its Sacramento office, leaving no out-of-town television news bureaus in the capital.

*The dominance of ratings-oriented news priorities.* Television news directors cite purported lack of interest in legislative news as one reason for limited coverage. News directors interviewed for this report characterized legislative news as boring, uninteresting and limited primarily to talking heads.<sup>15</sup> In their view, legislative proceedings do not offer the kinds of stories with exciting visual footage and human interest appeal which television news directors seek. Thus, during the study period television brought the public Woody Herman's eviction notice, pit bull terrier maulings, Gary Hart's fall from grace and Bunel Spain's annual tomato throwing war. But it did little to bring significant environmental, housing, arts, insurance, criminal justice and election reform legislation to the public's attention.

When legislative proceedings *are* covered by television and radio, those issues with ratings-boosting appeal are more likely to be covered. The media tend to focus on conflicts between houses or parties and often use sports and military metaphors (like "battle" or "attack") to characterize political events, a practice which neglects analysis of issues themselves.<sup>16</sup> For example, bills which are subject to heavy partisan debate are favored for media coverage; other significant bills, not as hotly debated, are often neglected.

*Neglect of complex issues by the electronic media.* The media study found that complex issues requiring more than a sentence or two to summarize, even though of significant impact on a majority of California households, tended to be ignored by the electronic media. With the typical legislative television story 50 seconds long and radio 40 seconds long, the electronic media were able to provide little analysis of issues. Several legislative staff expressed concern that the extreme simplification process to which legislative issues are subjected by the media often generates distorted and inaccurate reporting.

*Relative superiority of newspaper coverage.* "Thank God the media is plural! We don't have to rely on just one."<sup>17</sup> This sentiment, expressed by KNBC-TV Los Angeles news anchor Jess Marlow in a 1977 study of media coverage of California state political campaigns, underscores the complementary nature of the media. Fast-breaking up-to-the-minute news can be expected from television and radio. Newspapers traditionally provide more analytic coverage of issues, extending over longer periods of time.

Newspapers were true to form in the media study. They provided the broadest coverage across all five markets and more in-depth analysis than either television or radio. Their coverage, however, was limited at best. The typical newspaper report on a bill was 11 column inches, with one-third of the bills covered in two column inches or fewer.

*No link between public policy issues and legislation.* Although several public policy issues were covered in depth by the media during the study dates, little discussion was offered about the Legislature's role. All media provided significant coverage of AIDS and the growing problem of the homeless, for example, but did not link these issues to related state legislative measures.



*Lack of context and follow-up.* Another shortcoming of legislative reporting was lack of context. News reports relayed what happened earlier in the day or yesterday but provided little to nothing about the background of the legislation or the path it had yet to take through committee hearings, joint conference committees, floor debates and to the governor's desk. The individual is often left with the feeling that the action is a *fait accompli*, the door apparently closed on the possibility of participating (letters, phone calls) in the legislative process.

The media's attention span for legislative issues is also relatively short. The media tend to emphasize fast-breaking coverage at the expense of interpretive reporting. With the exception of the top 10 issues, the media mentioned most bills only once. Follow-up was nil. As one legislator noted in a recent article on Capitol press coverage, the media place "predominant focus on popular issues (drugs, sex, violent crimes) and less attention to 'thematic' long-term issues."<sup>18</sup>

*Local issues more likely to be covered.* Not surprisingly, legislative issues of local impact were more likely to be covered by all three media in their respective cities. For example, the Los Angeles Transportation Reorganization Act and a bill authorizing toll roads in Orange County received extensive coverage in southern California media.

Also not surprising was the finding that the Sacramento media provided the most extensive coverage of legislative proceedings during the study dates. Los Angeles placed second, primarily due to the coverage of legislative issues provided by the *Los Angeles Times*.

*Limited statewide coverage of legislative issues.* The study found statewide legislative coverage, that is, news of single issues covered in all five markets of the study, to be limited to only 10 bills.<sup>19</sup> Newspapers reported on all 10 of these issues, whereas television and radio reporting varied from market to market.

In other words, of the hundreds of important issues acted upon by legislators during the final days of the 1987 session, only 10 reached a statewide audience on the study days, and that audience was comprised primarily of newspaper readers. Those who obtained their news primarily from television, estimated to be two-thirds of the population, would have learned of only a handful of issues during the study period, with coverage varying widely in both content and amount from market to market.

It is instructive to contrast the delivery of news on state legislative issues with that of local, national and even international issues. Viewers of national network news programs (the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news programs) can flip the dial from program to program on any given night and find essentially the same national and international stories reported. The same holds true for television stations at the local level. Viewers expect the network affiliates and independent television stations in their local market areas to carry similar news of local events on any given day.

But a vacuum exists for the reporting of state issues. Whereas television news programs create viewer awareness of local, national and international issues, the same does not occur for key statewide concerns, in particular, for legislative and other state government news.

*The need for improved source and distribution of legislative news.* The California Legislature is one of the most powerful governmental bodies in the nation. Without the focus of media attention, the Legislature will continue to operate out of the public eye—with unfortunate consequences for the conduct of state business. The findings of this media study indicate a need for a consistent source of legislative news as well as a distribution mechanism that reaches the entire state.

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## NOTES

1. The California Chamber of Commerce *Alert*, the League of Women Voters *California Voter* and *First Reading* of the California Association of Hospitals and Health Systems are just a few of the many publications distributed to members of interest groups.  
Source: *California Legislative Newsletters*, compiled by the California State Library, July 1987.
2. The eight days selected for the study were: Wed., Aug. 26; Thurs., Aug. 27; Wed., Sept. 2; Thurs., Sept. 3; Tues., Sept. 8; Wed., Sept. 9; Thurs., Sept. 10; and Fri., Sept. 11, 1987.
3. Fay, James S., Anne G. Lipow, and Stephanie W. Fay, eds. *California Almanac: 1986-1987 Edition*. Novato, CA: Pacific Data Resources, 1987.  
Gill, Kay, and Donald P. Boyden, eds. *Gale Directory of Publications, 1988: An Annual Guide to Newspapers, Magazines, Journals, and Related Publications*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1988.
4. Ratings information was obtained from Arbitron and Nielsen data as well as station managers. If the top-rated early and late evening television news broadcasts both appeared on the same station, then the second-rated news program was monitored for one of those time slots.  
Legislative activities on a given day were tracked by monitoring the late afternoon and evening TV and radio newscasts and the next morning's newspaper. Although the overall top-rated radio news hour is during morning drive time, the study selected the top-rated late afternoon drive time radio news broadcast to correspond more closely with the news coverage provided by evening television news programs and the next morning's newspapers.
5. Story lengths of television and radio legislative news reports during study days:  

Television (n = 47 stories)	Radio (n = 53 stories)
median story length: 50 sec.	median story length: 40 sec.
average story length: 64 sec.	average story length: 41 sec.
range: 10 sec. to 3:05 min.	range: 5 sec. to 2:15 min.
6. The first example is from the KNBC-TV 11 p.m. newscast, August 27, 1987, Los Angeles. The second example is from the August 26, 1987, 5 p.m. newscast of KGO-TV in San Francisco.
7. Two-thirds (66%) of Americans obtain most of their news from television, 36% from newspapers and 14% from radio. Source: *America's Watching: Public Attitudes Towards TV*. New York: Television Information Office, 1987.
8. From the September 2, 1987, 4 p.m. KSDO radio newscast, San Diego.
9. From the September 10, 1987, 4 p.m. KSDO radio newscast, San Diego.
10. A March 1983 study by Carl Jensen and Sonoma State University Communications Studies students found a similar pattern for newspaper coverage. An analysis of the front pages of weekday editions of six California newspapers for the month of March showed only 11 stories

on state politics out of a total of more than 900 page one stories. In other words, just 1.2% of stories on the front pages of these newspapers dealt with state political issues. Source: Jensen, Carl. "State Politics Not Exactly Prime-Time News in California." *California Journal* 15 (May 1984): 199–201.

11. Assembly Office of Research computer printout of legislative action was provided by Linda Beatty, Associate Consultant. Legi-Tech bill monitoring printout was provided by David Lee, Sales Representative, and Sheryl Bell, General Manager.
12. This publication was checked for bills identified as "urgent legislation." California. State Legislature. Senate Rules Committee. *1987 Digest of Significant Legislation: Covering the Period of December 1, 1986, through September 11, 1987*. Sacramento, CA, 1987.
13. Two stories on the supercollider issue totaling 4 minutes were aired by KCRA-TV, Sacramento, 5 p.m. newscast, Sept. 2,
14. Gill, Kay, see note above.
15. Also discussed in: Fernandez, Elizabeth. "Scoff and Counter-Scoff." *California Journal* 17 (January 1986), p. 53.
16. The sports analogy was pointed out by a legislative staff member interviewed for the study. It is also discussed in a 1977 study of media coverage of state politics: Leary, Mary Ellen. *Phantom Politics: Campaigning in California*. Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1977.
17. Leary, p. 58.
18. Jeffe, Sherry Bebitch. "How Good is Press Coverage of the State Capitol?" *California Journal* 18 (November 1987), p. 554.
19. The seven issues from the list of top 10 receiving coverage in all five markets of the study were: income tax reform, the supercollider, tax rebates, teen abortions, smoking bans on airplanes, minimum wage increases, and AIDS prevention in schools. Three additional issues with coverage in all five markets were beer beverage distribution, freeway violence bills and insurance reform.



## **PART II**

# **The Experience of Other Jurisdictions**





## **Chapter 3**

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# **C-SPAN'S Televised Coverage of the United States Congress**

Since 1979, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) has distributed gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the United States House of Representatives and other public affairs programming via satellite to cable television systems nationwide. In 1986, C-SPAN added full coverage of the Senate as well. The C-SPAN model offers important insights into many of the issues that are also directly relevant to a California network—philosophy, production values, programming practices and legal structure. This chapter describes the history and philosophy of C-SPAN and suggests lessons which may be of particular value in California.

### **A. How C-SPAN Began: Cable Industry Initiative**

In the mid-1970s, the cable industry began using communications satellites in geosynchronous orbit to distribute television programming nationwide. Home Box Office and Ted Turner's WTBS in Atlanta were the first cable networks to uplink programming to a satellite for transmission to cable systems all over the country. With the advent of this powerful new system of delivery, cable industry representatives began to look for original programming to distribute.

At the same time, the U.S. House of Representatives had voted to allow television cameras into its chambers. The House installed remote-control video cameras, hired technicians to operate them and began to distribute video coverage into each congressman's office. Video coverage of House proceedings was thus available, although initially it was not distributed outside Congress itself.

The time was ripe to launch C-SPAN, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network. Brian Lamb, now C-SPAN's President, and others convinced several of the cable industry's largest multiple system operators (MSOs) that coverage of the House would provide an important public service as well as benefit the cable industry politically. C-SPAN was launched in 1979 as a cooperative venture of the cable industry. In 1986, C-SPAN added live coverage of the floor proceedings of the U.S. Senate.

C-SPAN's start-up funding and operating budget was contributed by the cable systems that carried its signal. C-SPAN does not pay for or control the facilities or personnel that are responsible for the production of video coverage from the House and Senate floors. It simply distributes these signals nationwide via satellite. C-SPAN also adds much of its own programming to the overall mix, such as committee hearing coverage, call-in shows, interviews and election coverage.

C-SPAN evolved over time and did not emerge full-blown as an established network. Since its founding, the number of subscriber cable systems has grown from 350 to over 3,000. Early programming consisted solely of live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House of Representatives. Daily call-in shows began in 1980, and coverage of House and Senate hearings started in 1981. C-SPAN first provided exclusive gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Democratic and Republican presidential nominating conventions in 1984.

C-SPAN began with a staff of only four persons. Because it did not produce programming itself and simply distributed the programming originated by the House cameras, its staffing requirements were minimal. With the addition of C-SPAN-produced programming, press and public information services, affiliate marketing, and more recently research, its staff has grown to 140 employees. Its beginning start-up outlay of \$500,000 and operating budget of \$200,000 has grown to a 1989 annual operating budget of \$12 million.

## **B. C-SPAN's Philosophy**

C-SPAN started by cablecasting only live coverage of the House and evolved into a network offering other types of programming. Its staff believes its principal strength lies in balanced programming and a commitment to unedited telecasts. C-SPAN scrupulously attempts to keep its coverage straightforward and above board at all times. No special favors or coverage are afforded any legislator or interest.

C-SPAN sees its production values as different from other news services and television networks. It stresses that gavel-to-gavel coverage is a different way to make and watch television. This kind of programming challenges conventional production practices and television viewing habits. Although C-SPAN now

produces other programming, such as interview and call-in shows, its first commitment is to live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House and Senate. All other programming is scheduled around it.

Camera practices in the House and Senate chambers are governed by the rules of these two bodies. Coverage is considered to be a video *Congressional Record*. Reaction shots and views of an empty chamber, for example, are not allowed. Whoever has the floor is on camera. Except during votes and at the end of legislative business, cameras take only medium shots and nothing closer. Video and still cameras other than those controlled by the House and Senate are usually not allowed in the chambers.

Live gavel-to-gavel coverage of Congress avoids the potentially thorny political problem of covering some legislators more or less than others. C-SPAN makes no editorial decisions to highlight any of the day's Congressional events. Even so, some critics express concern that government should not be in charge of covering itself on television. They cite fears of government control of the media. C-SPAN replies that its coverage of Congress is no more than an electronic video *Congressional Record*, preserving an accurate account of what happens on the floor. Whereas the *Congressional Record* can be altered after the fact by legislators, live gavel-to-gavel coverage can not.

In keeping with its philosophy regarding the importance of live unedited coverage of the House and Senate, C-SPAN feels strongly that cable operators should show both C-SPAN (House) and C-SPAN II (Senate) in their entirety on separate channels. C-SPAN discourages splitting a channel between these two feeds, or worse, sharing them with other programming. Cable operators are not allowed to "cherry pick" programming—that is, selectively show only certain parts of C-SPAN's programming. However, operators have been able to designate a time during their schedule when only C-SPAN is shown and other times on the same channel when other programming is shown. Some cable systems, for example, share C-SPAN with local government programming on a municipal access channel. New contracts prohibit sharing C-SPAN with other programming, although existing time sharing practices can continue.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to distinguish between C-SPAN programming and its telecasts of the House and Senate. C-SPAN produces all its own programming other than coverage of the House and Senate chambers and, therefore, copyrights that material. The Senate and House feeds, on the other hand, are produced by them and are considered to be owned by the people. Its video feeds are not copyrighted. News organizations can take the feed from the House or Senate directly from the Capitol press rooms without using C-SPAN at all, or may excerpt House and Senate video from C-SPAN's transmission.

Both C-SPAN and the House and Senate put restrictions on the use of their feeds. Taped footage is not to be used for commercial or political purposes. This means that incumbents cannot use C-SPAN excerpts in political commercials. Any of C-SPAN's copyrighted material can, however, be used by certain groups in certain situations. A bona fide news organization can use C-SPAN footage in producing a regularly scheduled newscast. The news organization can use a

maximum of three minutes at a time but cannot air an entire C-SPAN program as a news event or as its own program.

C-SPAN does not charge a fee for taping and using its feed. It encourages stations to give credit to C-SPAN, but this rule is difficult to enforce. C-SPAN does not want to be viewed or used as a production house. Documentary makers are therefore excluded from using C-SPAN footage in their productions.

### C. A Loyal and Growing Audience

As of February 1989, C-SPAN (House) potentially reaches 42.6 million homes through nearly 3,200 cable systems. C-SPAN II (Senate), which began in 1986, reaches a smaller potential audience of 16.7 million homes on 581 cable systems.<sup>2</sup>

C-SPAN has commissioned a number of studies to determine the nature of its viewers.<sup>3</sup> To summarize the findings:

*A growing audience.* Based on a nationwide sample in 1987, C-SPAN is watched in approximately one-third of cable homes with C-SPAN. The survey determined that an estimated 10.9 million homes out of [then] 32 million C-SPAN television households watch the network. This represents a 43% increase in the number of households watching C-SPAN since 1984. During 1988, a presidential election year, C-SPAN viewership rose dramatically to 21.6 million viewers, nearly doubling its audience from the previous year.

*Regular and loyal viewers.* The 1987 survey found that the average viewer watches C-SPAN 9.5 hours per month and C-SPAN II 6.5 hours per month. One-eighth (12%) of C-SPAN viewers tune in to C-SPAN 20 hours or more per month. These comprise the loyal followers nicknamed "C-SPAN junkies."

*Politically active.* C-SPAN viewers are substantially more likely to be politically involved than non-viewers—to contact public officials, contribute to political campaigns and vote. In fact, 93% claim to have voted in the 1984 general election compared with 53% for the national average. In the 1986 congressional elections, 69% of C-SPAN watchers voted, almost double the 37% national average. The 1988 presidential election drew 78% of C-SPAN's viewers to the polls, compared to the national voter turnout of 50%.

*Political opinion leaders.* C-SPAN viewers are also more politically knowledgeable than non-viewers. The 1984 survey found that C-SPAN viewers were more than twice as likely as non-viewing cable subscribers to know, for example, why Attorney General Edwin Meese happened to be in the news. And they are more likely to share their knowledge of politics with others. The 1987 survey found that 82% of C-SPAN viewers discuss politics with friends and family compared with a national average of 61%.

*High socio-economic status.* Viewers are up-scale in social and economic status. According to 1987 survey data, over one-third (37%) hold college or graduate degrees. Nearly 60% have household incomes greater than \$30,000 a year compared to 41% for the national average. More recent figures suggest the C-SPAN audience may be broadening, however. The 1988 survey found viewers to be approaching the national norms for educational and income levels, perhaps due to a broader range of viewers drawn to presidential election coverage.

*Dedicated news seekers.* C-SPAN viewers consume more news than non-C-SPAN viewers. The 1984 survey found that the weekly average of television news watching is 9.7 hours for C-SPAN viewers and 6.5 hours for non-C-SPAN viewers. C-SPAN viewers spend about 6.5 hours per week reading the newspaper, compared with 4.6 hours for the non-C-SPAN audience. The 1987 survey noted that 76% of C-SPAN viewers read the newspaper every day compared with 44% for the national average.

*Satisfied cable television consumers.* C-SPAN viewers tend to be a satisfied consumer group, both with C-SPAN and cable television. Three-fourths believe C-SPAN is presenting an unbiased look at Congressional proceedings. And 92% perceive cable to be a good value for their money compared with 81% for the nation.

Although C-SPAN is concerned about expanding its audience, it feels less pressure to draw large audiences than the broadcast networks, local affiliates, independent stations and even Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliates. C-SPAN has maintained an institutional bias against ratings. It believes C-SPAN is a public service and people should have the opportunity to view it, even if only a minority actually take advantage of it. In its view, a majority of the people do not vote, carry petitions, participate in politics or care a great deal about government. Why should audience size, therefore, be the predominate decision factor for carrying C-SPAN?

In recent years C-SPAN has conducted studies to understand and serve its audience better. As one C-SPAN employee remarked, "Public service can only go so far." C-SPAN has found it difficult to serve its audience without knowing the characteristics of its viewers. Cable operators also want to know how many people watch its programming. C-SPAN has therefore increased its promotions to improve information for its audience. It is using focus groups to examine programming and has formed a separate research department as part of its internal structure.

#### **D. Funding from a Variety of Sources**

C-SPAN is funded primarily by cable systems. Each participating cable system pays C-SPAN a set fee per subscriber. Cable companies currently pay 4 cents per subscriber per month up to the first 200,000 subscribers. They pay 2.5 cents per subscriber after 200,000. About 90% of the operating budget is generated from cable license fees. The remainder of the budget comes from corporate underwriting, dubbing income, sale of C-SPAN's own *Update* magazine and miscellaneous revenues.

C-SPAN has a small dubbing department that sells tapes of its own productions. (Tapes of the direct House and Senate floor proceedings are not for sale by C-SPAN.) This operation brings in approximately \$200,000 per year, a relatively small part of its budget.

Donations from corporations and individuals comprise less than 5% of the budget. C-SPAN is reluctant to increase this portion of its budget substantially because it may cause potential conflicts of interest. C-SPAN intends to remain a



public service of the cable television industry. It does not want to create the impression that outside groups or interests might be "buying influence" in C-SPAN. It therefore seeks to encourage a large number of smaller donations to show broad-based support from a variety of companies. For the same reason, C-SPAN does not seek funding for specific programs.

Because C-SPAN is a 24-hour network, it does not sub-lease time to others on its two satellite transponders. It does, however, lease time on the sub-carrier channels, a portion of the frequency band that is not used for video transmission. C-SPAN generates a small amount of revenue from this practice.

C-SPAN grants free taping rights to schools. Its programs are now being archived for educational use by Purdue University. It has created a department to promote "C-SPAN in the Classroom," and outside contributors are being sought to fund educational uses of C-SPAN.

## **E. A Programming Commitment to Gavel-to-Gavel Coverage**

C-SPAN's first priority is live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House and Senate. It produces its own programming to fill the remaining time when the House or Senate is not in session. Producers decide what to cover and what approaches to take on these additional programs. Most of the producers are not from the television industry but, rather, have experience on Capitol Hill.

C-SPAN's Capitol coverage now extends well beyond live coverage of the House and Senate to the hearings of selected Congressional committees. Its call-in shows allow C-SPAN viewers to ask questions, discuss issues and voice opinions with newsmakers and journalists. C-SPAN airs three hours of call-in programming per day. Other events throughout the day include coverage of conferences, seminars and debates. Speeches from the National Press Club are a regular part of C-SPAN's schedule. Examples of conference coverage include the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the League of Cities and the National Governors Association.

Special events such as coverage of the major political party conventions make up a crucial component of C-SPAN's programming. Series which take an in-depth look at important issues are another aspect of its programming. "A Day in the Life..." examines the behind-the-scenes activities of various media organizations. C-SPAN analyzes the workings of the U.S. Courts in "America in the Courts." A historical look at the Constitution was provided by the series "Inside the Constitution."

As C-SPAN has grown, it has begun to cover events outside of Washington, D.C. In 1985 it launched the "State of the Nation" series which looked at issues facing state governments around the country. In 1987 and 1988, it covered presidential campaigns and primaries around the country on its "Road to the White House" series.

C-SPAN decides which events to cover based on three programming criteria: timeliness, the quality of the participants and the credibility of the sponsoring



organization. C-SPAN staff members stress the importance of maintaining the "integrity of the news product." It therefore televises the whole event or nothing at all.

C-SPAN's newest programming service is a two-channel audio feed available in the fall of 1989 on an experimental basis to satellite dish owners nationwide and cable subscribers in selected markets. One channel provides additional outlets for live congressional hearings and public policy conferences. The second channel carries the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) World Service 24 hours a day.

## **F. Production: A Collaboration of Independent Organizations**

The House and the Senate produce live gavel-to-gavel programming from their own chambers. C-SPAN does not own the equipment in the House or Senate. Nor does it employ the technicians who operate the cameras and call the shots. It simply plugs in and accepts the video feed offered by both houses—which any other bona fide news service can do as well. C-SPAN views its job as distributing these feeds from its satellite uplink to cable systems nationwide.

The Speaker's Office in the House and the Sergeant of Arms and the Rules Committee in the Senate control the cameras in each of the chambers. Each chamber uses six cameras which are remotely operated from control rooms in the Capitol basement. Cameras only show legislators who are delivering speeches or remarks from designated places in the chambers. Panning is not allowed except during voting periods and at the end of legislative business.

Both the House and the Senate release two feeds, "clean" and "keyed." The clean feed consists of the floor video and sound. The keyed feeds contain on-screen textual information identifying who is speaking, what issue is being discussed and the vote tally. C-SPAN picks up the keyed feeds and adds additional graphic information.

Start-up costs to place video equipment in the House were \$1.5 million in 1979. The House's annual operating budget, allocated by the House Appropriations Committee, is \$200,000. The Senate's start-up costs in 1985 were \$3.6 million. Each chamber's production staff consists of a director, a technical director, an audio monitor, a character-generator operator, three remote camera operators (two cameras per operator) plus engineers.

C-SPAN produces and distributes all other programming seen on the 24-hour network. It maintains a studio, editing suites and a full array of field production equipment. Although C-SPAN stresses the "unedited look" in its produced programs, staff emphasize the importance of providing broadcast quality program production to which the viewing public is accustomed.

C-SPAN currently has a staff of approximately 140 persons. In addition to Administration, its departments include Corporate Development, Programming and Production (75 persons in this department alone), Corporate Communication, Research and Marketing.

## G. C-SPAN's Impact

When C-SPAN first began in 1979, members of Congress and political analysts expressed concern that television coverage might change the governing process. They were wary of the potential for political grandstanding and the use of television for self promotion. Some argued that government "under a microscope" was not the best way to govern—that there were aspects of the process which should not be placed under constant public scrutiny.

When the Senate debated opening its doors to cameras seven years later, the same concerns were expressed. It conducted a two-month experiment with live television in 1986 as a basis for deciding whether or not to open the staid and tradition-bound chamber to the camera's eye and hence to cable households via C-SPAN II. Out of 20 types of floor activity monitored during the experiment, the only change clearly linked to television coverage was a 250 percent increase in the number of "special orders," the speeches made by senators before the start of regular business. Senator Albert Gore commented that "television coverage has changed the patterns of Senate floor activity very little."<sup>4</sup>

At the conclusion of the experiment, even some of the most ardent opponents of television coverage voted to allow cameras into the chamber. Senator Alan Simpson eventually became a supporter but noted that the Senate needed more rule changes to prevent grandstanding, to limit the length of filibusters and to restrict the addition of non-essential amendments to legislation. Although Rules Committee hearings were held, few changes were actually made. The Committee did, however, ban political and commercial use of Senate television coverage.

After 10 years of House coverage and three years of Senate coverage, the worst fears of television coverage have not been realized. Members on both sides of the aisle and at both ends of the political spectrum sing its praises. Once a leading opponent of television coverage, Senator John Danforth conceded that "the playing to the cameras and the galleries that I expected just didn't occur." Senator Robert Byrd observed that the presence of television cameras has meant better debates and "shorter and more polished speeches."<sup>5</sup>

Patently political uses of C-SPAN have not gone unnoticed, however. When Republican congressmembers used the period of time at the end of the legislative day to deliver speeches attacking Democratic foreign policy, House Speaker O'Neill ordered camera operators to pan the floor and show television viewers that the chamber was empty. This May 10, 1984, incident provoked controversy on both sides of the aisle and a strong editorial in favor of O'Neill's action from the *Washington Post*.<sup>6</sup>

House members who call themselves the Conservative Opportunity Society have frequently used the "open mike" session at the end of the day's business to rally public support for their causes, knowing that C-SPAN spreads the message nationwide. The group's leader, Representative Newt Gingrich, openly acknowledges that his rise to minority whip position in the House Republican leadership is a result of his visibility on national television.<sup>7</sup>

A political concern voiced by incumbents is that challengers and special interest groups will use excerpts taped from C-SPAN coverage in negative

advertising campaigns. Incumbents are not allowed to use footage for their own political campaigns whereas challengers can not be prohibited from using footage against them because of First Amendment protection. Only one incumbent, however, has ever been faced with the use of potentially damaging footage by a challenger, and that was in 1982.<sup>8</sup>

Political impacts aside, a 1984 *National Journal* report revealed several probable effects of televising the House—most notably, better time management by those on Capitol Hill and improved communications with constituents.<sup>9</sup> Internal operations have become more efficient because legislators, their staffs and lobbyists can use television monitors to keep themselves current on floor activities. Legislators use C-SPAN to improve their outreach to constituents. They frequently notify home television stations and newspapers in advance when their floor speeches are expected to appear on C-SPAN.

Legislators have reported that the presence of C-SPAN has “helped build the fires” of constituent scrutiny under several key issues.<sup>10</sup> Some attribute the increase in letters they receive regarding their positions on issues and their behavior on the floor at least in part to C-SPAN’s coverage.

Personal testimonials to C-SPAN reflect another impact of the network. A 1988 profile of C-SPAN viewers indicates that watching the network has motivated many to volunteer for campaign committees, return to school to study political affairs and even run for elected office.<sup>11</sup>

The introduction of C-SPAN into school and university curricula is another important benefit of government television coverage. C-SPAN gives those who are new to the political arena an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the inner workings of government. As its use in schools expands, C-SPAN offers the promise of improving the political socialization of children and young adults and creating a more politically aware future electorate.<sup>12</sup>

## H. Conclusions

C-SPAN sets a number of precedents for the operation of a state government television service—its philosophy of televising events in full, its dual organization and funding model and its bias-minimizing practices.

*Philosophy and production values.* C-SPAN sees itself first and foremost as a public service. Its top priority is to cablecast the gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the House and Senate. Other programming is scheduled around floor sessions.

In both its coverage of floor proceedings and the other programming which it produces, C-SPAN is committed to balanced coverage. It achieves this primarily by showing the event in full rather than presenting an edited version of highlights.

C-SPAN realizes that gavel-to-gavel programming is a new way to make and watch television. It is attentive to its viewership profile and has initiated research and marketing campaigns aimed at increasing viewers. Overall, however, C-SPAN maintains an institutional bias against the ratings numbers and does not tailor its programming to fit the mold of traditional commercial broadcast television formats.

*Dual organizational and funding model.* The C-SPAN programming that reaches viewers via cable television is actually the result of a dual organizational endeavor. The U.S. House and Senate, responsible for creating gavel-to-gavel feeds of their proceedings, operate under their own rules and funding. The nonprofit organization, C-SPAN, in turn distributes these feeds to the public and adds programming of its own. It is independent of Congress and is responsible for its own operation and funding.

*Bias-minimizing practices.* The House and Senate view their television operations as an electronic "camera of record." Rules instituted by both houses prohibit interrupting or editing the feed.<sup>13</sup> This approach is also followed by C-SPAN in its coverage of committee hearings, conferences, Press Club speeches and election campaigns. The commitment to no editing by both the Congress and C-SPAN ensures that coverage is balanced.

C-SPAN was established by the cable industry as an independent nonprofit organization. It receives a majority of its funding from fees paid by cable companies based on subscribership. Corporate and foundation underwriting forms a minimal portion of revenue, thereby preventing special interests from influencing programming.

## NOTES

1. C-SPAN has changed its affiliation agreement to full-time carriage. New contracts prohibit time sharing C-SPAN with other programming. Time sharing is not prohibited for cable systems currently using this practice. Nor is it prohibited for C-SPAN II. Source: Susan Swain, Vice-President for Corporate Communications, C-SPAN, April 1988.
2. Paul Kagan Associates. "Cable Network Census: February 1989." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 131 (March 31, 1989): 10.
3. Fall 1988 viewership figures are reported in: Aversa, Jeannine. "C-SPAN Gaining Broader Appeal." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 2 (January 9, 1989): 25.  
The 1987 University of Maryland Survey Research Center findings are reported in: Lamb, Brian, and the staff of C-SPAN. *C-SPAN: America's Town Hall*. Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988.  
The 1984 C-SPAN viewership findings are reported in: Robinson, Michael, and Maura Clancey. "Who Watches C-SPAN?" *C-SPAN Update* (January 14, 1985): 1-4.
4. Calmes, Jacqueline. "Senate's Romance with TV Ends in Marriage." *Congressional Quarterly* (August 2, 1986): 1744-1745.
5. Clark, Timothy. "The House on Cable." *Journal of the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 15.  
"Senate TV Coverage Draws Rave Reviews." *Los Angeles Times* (June 3, 1987): I-4. Speeches in Senate, June 2, 1987, on the first year anniversary of television coverage of the Senate.  
Shear, Michael D. "C-SPAN Turns 10—and the House Is Still Standing." *Los Angeles Times* (April 5, 1989): VI-1.
6. Discussed in Lamb, p. 119, and Clark, p.15.
7. Shear, p. VI-1.
8. In 1982, a political campaign ad derived from C-SPAN footage was used against incumbent Representative Bob Michel (R-Illinois). Michel won the election, although it was an unexpectedly close race. Discussed in Lamb, pp. 257-259.
9. Clark, pp. 14-15.
10. Clark, p. 14.
11. Reported in *C-SPAN: America's Town Hall*.
12. Weisberg, Nancy R. "C-SPAN: America's Network." Unpublished paper, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 1986.
13. On March 16, 1988, Speaker Pro Tempore Gary Ackerman turned off the microphone of Rep. Robert Dornan claiming his politically charged speech on Nicaraguan *contra* aid exceeded the one-minute time limit. Amid charges of censorship, this action resulted in the passage of a resolution barring any cut-off of audio or visual broadcast signals.  
Source: Harold, Rosemary. "Political Brouhaha' Disrupts Floor Debate." *C-SPAN Update* 6, no. 13 (March 28, 1988): 1.





## **Chapter 4**

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# **Public Affairs Television in the Fifty States**

In a hierarchy of legislative television programming activity, California ranks near the bottom of all states. With over 10 percent of the nation's populace within its borders, California is a leading U.S. economic and cultural power. Yet its citizens are minimally informed through the television medium of the major publicpolicy issues confronting the Legislature.

California's commercial broadcast stations pay scant attention to legislative proceedings. (See Chapter 2, "Media Neglect.") Public television's coverage of legislative issues is little improved. None of California's public television stations currently airs programs that regularly focus on legislative issues.<sup>1</sup> Other potential sources of legislative television programming—the Legislature itself, state executive branch agencies, cable systems, the state university system or nonprofit public policy institutions—have not entered the vacuum.

The wide variety of public affairs programming produced by public television, cable systems and government agencies in other states provides an instructive contrast to California's meager fare. Regular news and discussion programs which focus specifically on the legislature are available in three-fourths of the states (Table 4.1), produced primarily by public television stations. ("Regular" programming is defined as scheduled programs, usually daily or weekly, and does not include news segments in commercial television newscasts.) In the past

decade, cable television has grown in importance as a means to deliver state public affairs programming to television viewers, either as a producer of programming for local origination channels or as a transmitter of programs originated by other organizations.

Although gavel-to-gavel proceedings are televised in only six states, there is considerable interest in other states where studies are being conducted and experiments launched. Each state which currently provides televised gavel-to-gavel proceedings—Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oregon and Rhode Island—takes a unique approach to legislative coverage (Table 4.2). The state of New York even includes the oral arguments before the state's highest court on its gavel-to-gavel programming line-up.

This chapter surveys the wide variety of state public affairs programming available to television viewers throughout the country. It focuses on public television and cable systems, the major distributors of such programming. The chapter first looks at program formats, distribution methods and funding sources, followed by an in-depth look at selected states. It concludes with a discussion of issues common to all legislative programming services—viewership, effects on the legislative process and bias-minimizing practices. A 50-state compilation of legislative and public affairs television coverage is provided in Table 4.3 at the end of the chapter.

## **A. The Structure of State Public Affairs Programming**

Each state which provides television coverage of legislative proceedings and other public policy issues presents its own unique mix of program formats, distribution systems and funding sources. This section summarizes the more typical patterns found among the 50 states.

### ***1. Overview of Programming Formats***

A public affairs program format common to many of the states is the legislative news wrap-up, a daily or weekly summary of current political events, usually produced by public television stations. More in-depth analysis and debate is provided by political experts in roundtable discussions and press corps commentaries, other common public affairs program formats covering current events. Public television viewers in many states can tune in to magazine-style programs and documentaries which generally take a broader look at key state public policy issues. Although issue-specific programs may not be as timely as news and discussion programs, they often go into more depth by providing historical background and investigative reporting.

Perhaps the most in-depth look at government proceedings is offered by gavel-to-gavel coverage. While the cameras roll and the action proceeds in "real time" without interruption, viewers are free to form judgements and evaluate the process without the mediation of reporters and political analysts. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative and other state government proceedings is offered in only a few states, although interest is growing throughout the nation.

States devote widely varying amounts of time to public affairs programming—from a few minutes per week summarizing the news highlights

**Table 4.1**  
**Hierarchy of State Legislative**  
**Television Programming in the 50 States**

Type of programming	No. of states	Comments
<b>Dedicated legislative coverage</b>		
1. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative proceedings	6	Unedited coverage of one or both houses and/or selected committees: Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island.
2. News and analysis programming which focuses on the legislature	36	Daily or weekly legislative news and analysis programs, 30–60 minutes long, produced primarily by public television. Aired only during the session in many states.
<b>Occasional or special-event legislative coverage</b>		
3. Broader public affairs programming that includes legislative issues on irregular basis	30	Usually weekly programs on a variety of topics, 30–60 minutes long, produced primarily by public television. Formats include magazine style, panel discussion, viewer call-ins, documentary. Includes California.
4. No regular legislative or state public affairs programming	2	Only ad hoc coverage of campaign debates, state-of-the-state addresses and other special events. Montana and Wyoming identified by study.

The combined number of states exceeds 50 in this table because many states provide more than one type of state public affairs program. In fact, in at least 25 states, television viewers can tune in to two or more programs on state legislative and other public affairs issues.

to full-time channels providing gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative proceedings. Some states offer legislative programming only when the legislature is in session. Others provide programming on public affairs issues year-round and highlight the legislature when it is in session. In many states, special events are televised on an *ad hoc* basis such as campaign debates for state races, governors' state-of-the-state addresses, inaugurations and opening and closing legislative ceremonies.

Although the 50 states encompass a wide diversity of public affairs television coverage, their program formats can be grouped into five major categories. Several formats are commonly combined in one program or varied from program to program:

- **gavel-to-gavel coverage** of house and/or senate floor proceedings, committee hearings, press conferences and major speeches; also unedited *ad hoc* coverage of special events including campaign speeches and formal debates between candidates in state races, state-of-the-state addresses and ceremonial events;
- **edited news programs** with short or lengthy clips from legislative proceedings, often employing a network news program format;
- **hosted "talk shows" and roundtable discussions** with a changing slate of guests who discuss and debate current issues; also, **press corps commentaries**, a variation on the talk show theme, similar to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) "Washington Week in Review;"
- **viewer call-in programs** which enable citizens to directly question government officials and officeholders, frequently combined with roundtable discussions;
- **in-depth issue analysis** through documentaries, magazine formats and educational programs.

## ***2. Program Distribution***

State public affairs programs reach television viewers by a variety of transmission media. Program distribution alternatives include broadcasting over the airwaves via VHF and UHF public television channels, cable television transmission on individual or interconnected cable systems and closed-circuit systems in the state capitol complex.

### ***a. Broadcasting: The Tradition of Public Television Legislative Programming***

By far the most common means of public affairs program distribution is broadcasting via public television stations, either to the local area or statewide to participating stations by satellite or microwave feeds. Television viewers in 48 states can watch regular programs produced by public television stations or networks, usually 30- to 60-minutes long and offered daily or weekly. In 36 of these states, programs focus specifically on the legislature. More general state public policy programs are offered in 30 states which include legislative topics on an



irregular basis. In at least 25 states, viewers can choose from more than one regularly scheduled state public affairs program. (See Table 4.1.)

Public television stations are granted licenses by the Federal Communications Commission for either state, community, university or local administrative authority. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting identifies 18 state public television licensees.<sup>2</sup> In most states with statewide public television networks, legislative programs are distributed by satellite or microwave to member stations' transmitters, thereby extending programming to a larger audience. Examples of state public television networks include New Jersey, Georgia, Nebraska and Kentucky.

Many public affairs programs produced by community, local or university stations reach only the local or regional area. "Legislative Viewpoint," for example, features legislators from the northern Cumberland area of Tennessee and is produced by WCTE in Cookeville. Similarly, KQED's "Express," a weekly program covering a variety of public affairs topics, is aired in the San Francisco area. In some states which are not administered as state networks, public television stations share their programs statewide. Florida Public Television's daily news program, "Today in the Legislature," is transmitted to the state's other community, local and university stations by satellite.

Over-the-air broadcasting of state public affairs programming by commercial television stations is limited with the exception of occasional documentaries and other specials. However, government media services departments in Minnesota, Illinois and Washington have succeeded in having legislative programs aired by some commercial stations.

### ***b. Cable Television: Novel Approaches to Program Distribution***

The use of cable television to deliver legislative and other public affairs programming has increased markedly in the past decade, spurred in large part by precedents set by C-SPAN on the national level and government access channel programming on the local level. Legislative media offices, executive branch agencies, public television stations and cable systems all produce state public affairs programming for distribution to television households by cable systems.

Because of its multichannel capacity, cable is an ideal medium to transmit gavel-to-gavel proceedings which, due to their length, are inappropriate for single-channel broadcast television stations. Of the six states identified by this study which televise legislative proceedings gavel-to-gavel, five deliver it by cable. Perhaps the most ambitious user of cable for gavel-to-gavel proceedings is the Rhode Island Legislature. It programs a government access cable channel with House and Senate proceedings and transmits programming to cable systems statewide by a microwave interconnect. Cable television systems in New York, Minnesota and Oregon distribute legislative proceedings to viewers in the capital and nearby metropolitan areas. In Nebraska, the public television network supplements its over-the-air programming by operating a cable channel which delivers gavel-to-gavel proceedings to the capital area.

Legislators in states throughout the country have discovered cable systems' ability to target constituents in their districts. In contrast to broadcast television

stations which can reach more than one legislative district, cable system franchise areas are relatively small, confined to single communities or even portions of municipalities. In Minnesota, Washington, New York and Illinois, for example, government media services videotape customized programs for legislators on a regular or occasional basis. These are sent to cable systems in legislators' districts and serve as electronic newsletters, informing constituents of their positions and actions on key legislation.

In North Carolina and New York, state executive branch agencies (as opposed to legislative offices) produce programming for delivery by cable systems. "OPEN/net," a weekly two-hour public affairs program, is produced by the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications and is transmitted by satellite to cable systems throughout the state. NY-SCAN, a service of the New York State Commission on Cable Television, televises a variety of gavel-to-gavel proceedings and other public affairs events via cable systems in the Albany area.

Government agencies and public television stations are not the only producers of cable-delivered legislative programming. Cable systems in some state capitals produce legislative programming for their own local origination channels. Austin [Texas] Cablevision, for example, originates three regular news and discussion programs: "Delegation," "Interview Point" and "Texas Politics." Viacom Cablevision of Nashville, Tennessee, produces "State of Our State," a weekly talk show featuring state legislators.

In three states identified by this study—New Hampshire, New Jersey and Florida—cable systems have joined forces to extend legislative and other types of public affairs programming beyond local franchise areas to cable households throughout the state. Continental Cablevision of Concord, New Hampshire, produces several public affairs programs for its local origination channel. The advertiser-supported programs are distributed by videotape to other cable systems in New Hampshire, known collectively as the Yankee Cable Network. Continental Cablevision received a 1987 ACE award, cable's equivalent of the Emmy awards, for overall commitment to local programming.

The Cable Television Network (CTN), owned by New Jersey cable operators, distributes public affairs programming of public and nonprofit agencies as well as independent production houses. Programs are transmitted by the cable-owned microwave interconnect to over 1.4 million cable households throughout the state. In 1988 the CTN began a cooperative project with New Jersey public television to cablecast selected legislative committee hearings. The monthly program, "Gavel to Gavel," presents hearings in full on timely and controversial issues. Committee hearing topics have included gun control, zoning and growth legislation, shoreline preservation and educational opportunities for minority students. The programs are taped and produced by the New Jersey Network and distributed to cable viewers by the CTN.

The Florida Cable Television Association (FCTA) originates a variety of public affairs programs from its own studio and transmits them statewide to cable systems via satellite. The distribution arm for FCTA programming is the Sunshine Network, a sports and public affairs service which is 51% owned by Florida cable operators. Two-thirds of the state's cable television viewers have

access to FCTA programming which includes "The Governor Meets the Press" and "Capital Dateline."<sup>3</sup>

***c. Closed-Circuit Distribution in the Capitol Complex***

A very localized form of cable television is used in several states to distribute video signals of proceedings from legislative chambers and committee rooms to television monitors throughout the capitol and nearby office buildings. States with closed-circuit systems include Oregon, Florida, Georgia, Virginia and Kentucky, discussed further in this chapter. Internal video monitoring systems are well-used and popular. Legislators, staff members, reporters and lobbyists rely on closed-circuit television systems to remain up to date on floor proceedings and committee hearings.

***3. Funding of State Public Affairs Television***

Nearly all states appropriate funding to public television stations for programming. Some designate it specifically for educational programming, others for general program production. According to the National Association of Public Television Stations, California and Texas are the only states in the nation which do not support public television operations with state appropriations.<sup>4</sup> Federal funding of public television is provided through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Funds are granted to public television (and radio) stations according to a formula based in part on the amount of non-federal funds which the station raises. In addition to state and federal appropriations, individual, corporate and foundation underwriting plays a large part in funding public broadcast programming.

Television programs produced by state agencies or legislative organizations are generally funded with state appropriations. Examples are the gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Rhode Island Legislature's Radio-Television Office and the variety of programs produced by the Minnesota Senate's Media Services. Outside underwriting of programming services of government agencies is not common. One exception is North Carolina's state agency-produced "OPEN/net" program which is funded in part by foundation and corporate underwriting.

Cooperative approaches to producing and funding state public affairs programs are becoming more common as states experiment with gavel-to-gavel and other innovative programming formats, especially those that involve costly and technically complex distribution systems. The Oregon Legislature has cooperated with the U.S. West telephone company, Oregon Public Broadcasting and cable systems in a pilot project to deliver gavel-to-gavel programming to Portland area cable households. In New Jersey cable systems and the state public television network jointly produce and distribute a monthly legislative program to cable television viewers statewide.

Although not a state public affairs television service, C-SPAN represents perhaps the most prominent example of a collaborative television venture. Since 1979 C-SPAN, a nonprofit corporation created by the cable industry, has taken the video signal provided by the U.S. Congress and transmitted it via satellite to cable systems throughout the country, supplementing the gavel-to-gavel proceedings with programming which it produces. (See Chapter 3, "C-SPAN.")

## **B. A Closer Look at Programming in Selected States**

Programming services in selected states are profiled here according to programming types. A 50-state summary of legislative television coverage concludes the chapter (Table 4.3). The profiles and 50-state summary are by no means comprehensive but, rather, serve as models to illustrate the diversity of state legislative and public affairs programming.

### ***1. Gavel-to-Gavel Coverage***

Six states currently offer gavel-to-gavel coverage of state legislative proceedings to television viewers—Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oregon and Rhode Island (Table 4.2). Massachusetts and Rhode Island distribute gavel-to-gavel programming statewide. In Minnesota, Oregon, Nebraska and New York, it is limited to cable systems in the capital and nearby metropolitan areas.

Several states take a partial gavel-to-gavel approach. North Carolina's "OPEN/net" presents unedited coverage of selected legislative committee or administrative agency hearings on its weekly two-hour program, followed by panel discussions and viewer call-ins. Once a month the Cable Television Network of New Jersey selects a key committee hearing to be presented in full on its "Gavel to Gavel" program. Legislative news programs often present extended excerpts from floor debates and committee hearings. Public television stations in South Dakota, Georgia, Kentucky and Virginia, for example, frequently devote from 15 minutes to virtually the entire news program to uncut coverage of key proceedings.

The gavel-to-gavel television services of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Nebraska are highlighted below. The additional states offering gavel-to-gavel coverage are described in following sections.

#### ***a. Rhode Island: A Leader in Cablecasting Gavel-to-Gavel Proceedings***

A unique interconnect system links 10 of Rhode Island's twelve cable service areas to bring live gavel-to-gavel coverage of both houses of the Legislature to citizens of the state.<sup>5</sup> Two commercial broadcast stations also receive the feed and air portions on their news programs. In addition, many radio stations use the cable feed to obtain "sound bites" for use in newscasts.

Live legislative coverage has been offered since 1985. The Interconnect Programming and Policy Advisory Board of the Public Utilities Commission allocated two interconnected access channels for statewide community programming on cable television, one of which is dedicated to government programming. Legislative coverage is shown from three to twelve hours per day depending on the level of activity. The Legislature is in session at least 60 days per year, with many sessions extending to 75 days.

**Table 4.2**  
**Gavel-to-Gavel Television Coverage of State Legislative Proceedings**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Description of gavel-to-gavel television programming</b>
MA	WGBX-WGBH Educ. Foundation	Public broadcast statewide	Massachusetts House sessions are aired in full to public television stations throughout the state.
MN	Minnesota Senate Media Services	Cable to Twin Cities area	Senate proceedings reach cable viewers via a capital area cable system interconnect.
NE	Nebraska Educ. Telecomm. Commission	Cable to Omaha & Lincoln	The proceedings of the unicameral body are cablecast to capital area viewers.
NY	New York State Commission on Cable Television-- NY-SCAN	Cable to capital area	Selected legislative committee hearings, state agency meetings and public affairs speeches are cablecast in the 3-county Albany area. NY-SCAN also provides full coverage of the state's highest court.
OR	Oregon Legislative Assembly Media Service	Cable to Portland area	Oregon Public Television and U.S. West telephone company cooperate with the Legislature to cablecast House, Senate and committee sessions in the Portland area; 1989 pilot project.
RI	Rhode Island Legislative Radio and TV Office	Cable statewide	The Legislature programs a state cable access channel with House and Senate floor and committee proceedings, distributed statewide by microwave interconnect.

In addition to gavel-to-gavel programming, most of these services produce other programs as well, described in the following sections.



Gavel-to-gavel programming is funded by the Legislature and produced by Capitol Television, an arm of the Legislature. Three cameras are located in each chamber, and a fully-equipped control room is housed in the basement of the State House. A staff of nine persons produces the daily coverage with an annual operating budget of approximately \$300,000.

In addition to House and Senate floor proceedings, Capitol Television covers committee hearings, press conferences and special events such as inaugurations and governor's addresses. The staff also produces a weekly news show summarizing the key events of the Legislature and call-in programs allowing viewers to speak with legislators.

Capitol Television takes a roving camera approach when covering legislative proceedings. Cameras may be pointed at any position at any time during floor debate. General Manager Laurence Walsh explains that other television stations can bring their own cameras into the State House, counterbalancing the potential for legislative control of media content.

#### ***b. Massachusetts: House Proceedings Aired by Public Television***

Gavel-to-gavel coverage of House floor action and selected committee hearings has been aired on Massachusetts public television since 1984. Televised coverage of the House of Representatives was several years in the making and became a politically charged process.<sup>6</sup> It resulted from efforts to loosen the Speaker's grip on House protocols, coupled with rules reform legislation and a desire to make citizens more aware of the legislative process. The Senate has traditionally not allowed video cameras to record its proceedings. However, in April, 1989, it voted to open the chamber to cameras and appointed an *ad hoc* committee to study how to implement television coverage. Under consideration by the committee is whether or not to offer gavel-to-gavel coverage.

WGBX (channel 44), the UHF sister station of public television station WGBH, broadcasts House proceedings live from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Wednesday, and airs taped committee hearings on Thursday during the same time slot. When the Legislature is in recess, programs about the Massachusetts legislative process are aired. A microwave relay system carries the channel to most of the state.

The House chamber is equipped with two remote-control cameras trained on the podium at the front of the chamber. By agreement with House leadership, cameras are not aimed at representatives at their desks. Microphones on each desk are wired into the audio system. When a representative speaks from his or her desk and is not viewed on camera, a still picture of the representative is aired.

Gavel-to-gavel coverage is funded by state appropriations at approximately \$500,000 per year. The state has purchased the necessary video equipment and maintains a fully-equipped control room in the State House. The five-person operations crew is employed by WGBH which is under contract with the House.

Beyond household television viewers, the most concentrated audience for "Gavel-to-Gavel" is composed of individuals who work closely with the Legislature. Legislative television coverage has been a boon to local political reporters by



enabling them to monitor proceedings from their offices, saving the time and expense of waiting at the State House for action to break. Television reporters frequently tape segments of WGBX legislative coverage and incorporate it into their own news programs. Many legislators and staff members also keep television sets in their offices to follow the proceedings.<sup>7</sup>

### ***c. Nebraska: Public Television's Use of Cable***

Public television coverage of Nebraska's unicameral legislature is a longstanding tradition dating back to the early 1970s. Gavel-to-gavel coverage is a more recent service, begun in 1981. It is carried on three cable systems by EduCable, Nebraska Educational Television's (NET) cable channel. Cable subscribers in Lincoln and Omaha are able to view up to six hours per day of unedited legislative proceedings.

A weekly news program, "Capitol View," is derived from the week's tapes. NET also produces a weekly press corps review, "Dateline Nebraska," which includes viewer call-ins with senators.

## ***2. Edited Legislative News Programming***

A common form of legislative media coverage in the 50 states is the news summary, a one-half to one hour program aired daily or weekly. Most public broadcast stations which cover their state legislatures offer a television news summary highlighted with edited videotaped footage from the chambers and committees. Alabama's "For the Record," Colorado's "Stateline," and "Governing North Dakota" are just a few examples of public television legislative news programming. Many states also provide coverage of interim legislative and other state government activities when the legislature is not in session.

Not all states which offer regular state political affairs programming adopt the news summary format. Press corps commentaries, like New York's "Inside Albany," often provide a lively and opinionated look at the legislature. Another popular format is the panel discussion in which political leaders analyze and debate current issues, sometimes included in regular news programs or combined with the viewer call-in format.

### ***a. South Dakota: A Small State with Extensive News Coverage***

South Dakota's public television legislative news program is typical of most such programming in that its producers condense the highlights of the day's activities into an evening newscast. It is atypical, however, because of the extent of its coverage relative to the population and economic resources of the state.

South Dakota Public Television has provided television coverage of the Legislature since 1972. The ambitious news-gathering techniques for the daily program, "Statehouse," are impressive in light of the state's low and sparse population (700,000). Although South Dakota Public Television's network operation center is in Vermillion, 250 miles from the state capital of Pierre, the station produces a program each day the Legislature is in session. Field news production equipment operated from a mobile unit tapes major committee and floor hearings. The tapes are flown from Pierre to Vermillion each day of the

annual sessions (35 days and 40 days on alternating years). Scripts are often transmitted by computer using an electronic mail system.

According to Richard Muller, Executive Producer, early session news programs are usually an hour long, whereas programs later in the session can run 90 minutes. Commercial broadcasters are free to use the feed. Viewer call-in programs are produced several times during the session with legislative leaders and the governor. Coverage also includes weekly press conferences held separately by the governor and Republican and Democratic leaders.

### ***3. News and Other Programming Derived from Gavel-to-Gavel Coverage***

Capturing *all* of the activity on the house and senate floors takes the guesswork out of being at the right place at the right time. Public television stations in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and Virginia tape legislative and selected committee proceedings in their entirety but do not broadcast them to the public. Rather, clips of the highlights become part of regular news and discussion programs. The gavel-to-gavel feed is also transmitted to monitors located in the capitol for the benefit of legislators and others who work closely with the legislature.

#### ***a. Florida's Statewide State-of-the-Art News Service***

From its state-of-the-art studio on the ninth floor of the state Capitol in Tallahassee, Florida Public Television (FPTV) produces daily and weekly news programs during each 60-day session of the Florida Legislature. Programs are transmitted by satellite to the other public television stations in the state. A few cable television access channels also carry its programming.

"Today in the Legislature" first aired in 1972. According to Executive Producer John Thomas, each news program includes extensive videotape clips from the major events of the day, taken from approximately 15 hours of gavel-to-gavel coverage of both houses and selected committees. It is aired by all eleven public television stations at approximately the same time each evening. The weekly wrap-up, "Week-in-Review," is produced in both English and Spanish.

Although gavel-to-gavel coverage is not broadcast to the public, it is provided on a two-channel system throughout the Capitol. In addition, large television screens in the rotunda are available to lobbyists and visitors interested in monitoring the activities of each chamber. When the Legislature is not in session, FPTV produces other government-related documentaries under contract to the State Department of Education.

FPTV transmits a video news release service to the other public television stations by satellite for one-half hour each weekday. The feed contains news items, public affairs clips and state agency public service announcements (PSAs) that can be used at the discretion of the public television stations. Commercial stations can obtain time on this feed for a fee.

A staff of 16 persons operates the FPTV Capitol studio. This is doubled during the session, primarily with the addition of part-time personnel for the production of "Today in the Legislature." The annual budget for legislative program production is approximately \$500,000.

***b. Georgia: A Legislative Television Pioneer***

When the Georgia Legislature is in session, 40 days per year, two cameras are trained on the activities of both the House and Senate. The five to six hours of tape generated each day is used to provide clips for the evening hour-long news program, "The Lawmakers," produced by Georgia Public Television (GPTV). Two control rooms and a mobile unit are maintained at the Capitol by GPTV during the session. The tapes from each day's proceedings are brought back to the station's studio for editing.

Although GPTV obtains gavel-to-gavel coverage, it only airs the highlights of each day's events. In contrast to commercial news programs, however, "The Lawmakers" includes extensive unedited segments of major floor debates and committee hearings, up to 15 minutes in length. The hour program often uses a talk show format and invites legislative leaders and executive branch administrators to discuss major issues.

Producer-Director Chuck Baker characterizes GPTV coverage as "the only broadcast game in town" when it comes to reporting on the state Legislature, "the medium of record for legislative coverage" relative to other media organizations. Baker emphasizes that GPTV's coverage is particularly important for persons in outlying areas of the state who do not receive as much newspaper and commercial television coverage of the Legislature as Atlanta area residents.

GPTV makes extensive use of college interns in all aspects of daily news production. As many as 10 interns are hired to be reporters and production assistants during each session. They are treated as full professional members of the news team. According to Baker, interns expand the capabilities of the GPTV news team and allow it to be several places at once.

"The Lawmakers," produced since 1971, is one of the oldest state political affairs programs in the nation. When the Legislature is not in session, GPTV airs a weekly half-hour news program, "Capitol Hill Report," which covers state government in general.

***c. Kentucky: Committed to Comprehensive Public Affairs Programming***

Kentucky Educational Television (KET) has produced legislative programming from its Capitol studio in Frankfort since 1978. During each biennial session, a variety of programming is generated from KET's gavel-to-gavel coverage of both chambers and selected committees. The daily legislative digest, "Kentucky General Assembly in Open Session," airs extended excerpts from selected committee hearings and floor debates. The program ranges from 30 to 90 minutes depending on the amount of activity in the Legislature, according to Producer Donna Moore. On occasion, KET airs entire proceedings of particularly controversial measures. Past examples are the debates and hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment and right-to-work laws.

The gavel-to-gavel coverage of both houses and several committees is transmitted to monitors located in the Capitol and nearby office buildings. Prior to 1988, KET's cable channel, KET-ETC, transmitted one house at a time in full on

the Lexington Telecable system. The decision of which house to televise was made a day in advance by program producers. Future transmission of gavel-to-gavel proceedings to cable television viewers is dependent on funding and technical capabilities.

The weekly press corps review, "Comment on Kentucky," is patterned after the PBS "Washington Week in Review" and has been running with the same host for over 11 years. KET also produces a weekly call-in program, "This is Kentucky," which invites viewers to discuss and debate a variety of public policy issues with panel members. During election campaigns, KET provides extensive coverage of major state races. Its candidate debates have become institutionalized in Kentucky political life.

All programs are produced in a studio housed in the dome of the Capitol. Approximately 30 people, including two complete camera crews per day, produce the legislative programs during the session. The total cost for a 60-day session is approximately \$750,000. The Legislature appropriates a portion of this specifically for legislative coverage.

#### ***d. Virginia: A Wide Variety of Governmental Programming***

Virginia's WNVC/WNVT is the only non-PBS affiliated public television network in the nation. With its close proximity to Washington, D.C., it focuses on coverage of governmental affairs, both national and state.

WNVC/WNVT tapes the full Senate proceedings as well as selected committee hearings and uses segments of the footage in several programs: "Virginia Legislature: The Week," "Richmond Report: The Week," "Richmond Report: Update" and "Virginia Legislature." WNVC/WNVT also produces "Making Virginia Laws," a talk show hosted by the Clerk of the Senate. "Capitol Events," aired on WNVT, often takes a gavel-to-gavel approach by showing a hearing in full. If the event runs over the program's allotted time, it is continued on the next program.

Commercial broadcasters frequently use portions of the legislative footage for their own newscasts. The service is offered at no charge, according to Bureau Chief William Bowman. Because of Virginia's proximity to Washington, D.C., WNVC/WNVT also airs feeds provided by the U.S. House and Senate and covers the State Department on a daily basis.

#### ***4. Broad Public Affairs Coverage***

While the activity of lawmakers is the focus of many states' public affairs programming, some extend coverage to executive branch agencies, regulatory boards and courts. Such programming may also emphasize public policy issues of statewide importance which do not necessarily focus on state government.

The New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority, for example, is a state public television network which offers a broad array of public affairs programming. Its program line-up is designed to counteract the strong presence of New York and Philadelphia media by presenting strictly New Jersey issues. "On the Record" highlights legislative news while "Front Page New Jersey" and "New Jersey Network" cover other news and public affairs issues unique to the state. "Another



View" targets the African-American audience, and "Images Imagenes" reaches out to the Latino community with relevant public affairs topics. Annually the network covers the state-of-the-state and budget addresses and the opposing party's rebuttals.

Examples of other public television programs which analyze a broad array of state public policy issues include "The Wisconsin Magazine," Oregon's "Front Street Weekly" and Minnesota's "Almanac," all of which cover legislative issues on occasion. New York and North Carolina, featured here, are noteworthy because state executive branch agencies produce programs that are transmitted over cable systems.

***a. NY-SCAN's Unique Approach to Gavel-to-Gavel Programming***

New York's State and Community Affairs Network, NY-SCAN, is operated by the New York State Commission on Cable Television. Shortly after the Commission was established in 1972, it began an experiment to explore the use of cable access channels to deliver government-related information. Albany-area cable systems allowed the Commission to program their government access channels. At first little was done, but in recent years NY-SCAN has expanded its coverage to twelve hours per day of live and videotaped coverage of a variety of state government proceedings. Programming is provided on cable systems in the three-county Albany area.

NY-SCAN Managing Director John Figliozi observes that little information about state government reaches the general public through television, the medium most used by the public for news. Whereas the broadcast networks and cable news channels cover national and international issues, and network affiliates and independent broadcast stations provide local news, the television media virtually ignore state government. NY-SCAN's goal, therefore, is to develop a full-time cable television service dedicated to information about state government and public policy issues.

NY-SCAN programming includes legislative committee hearings as well as selected executive agency hearings. Although Assembly and Senate chambers are not now televised, NY-SCAN has provided some coverage on an experimental basis. During the 1989 legislative session, it televised the debate and vote of the State Assembly on a bill to reinstate the death penalty. Coverage ran for six hours and was re-aired twice on NY-SCAN later that week. It was also seen nationally on C-SPAN II. The experiment was conducted to let legislators experience how a video system would operate in the chamber and assess how their work would be affected by the presence of cameras.

In cooperation with other state agencies, NY-SCAN also televises employee training sessions and programs about agencies' roles, policies and services. It covers press conferences and addresses by the governor and other state officials as well as notable speakers at nearby colleges and universities. Presentations at major conferences in the Albany area dealing with public policy issues are also televised.

In 1986, NY-SCAN began covering oral arguments before the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals. This is thought to be the first and only coverage of its

kind anywhere in the country.<sup>8</sup> Through an agreement with NY-SCAN, the Albany Law School's Government Law Center is a central repository for videotapes of the oral argument. Interested individuals and organizations can obtain videotape copies of cases from the Center for their legal and public policy research. The Center plans to produce educational and informational programming on a variety of legal topics raised by selected cases. This programming will be televised on NY-SCAN.

Cable channels used by NY-SCAN in the capital district are programmed 24 hours a day. NY-SCAN offers approximately 12 hours per day of live and videotaped programming. Character-generated text displays are shown during evenings and weekends.

NY-SCAN is funded by the State Commission from fees paid by cable companies based on their gross revenues. It has 12 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$400,000.

***b. North Carolina's "OPEN/net:" Award-Winning  
Public Affairs Television Programming***

Citizens of North Carolina have the opportunity to obtain in-depth information on current issues and interact with state officials in all branches of government on the weekly two-hour program, "OPEN/net," delivered by satellite to cable systems. Each week issues like prison reform, hazardous waste, AIDS and social security are discussed by public officials. The first hour of the program is devoted to unedited footage of government events such as legislative or administrative hearings. This is followed by an hour of discussion by a panel of legislators and other public officials, interspersed with telephone calls from viewers.

The Agency for Public Telecommunications, an executive branch department, was established in 1979 to determine cost-effective ways to use telecommunications to increase and improve delivery of public services to the people. Its "OPEN/net" program, first aired in 1984, is designed to bring state government closer to the people by giving them a chance to talk directly to state officials. The program covers not only legislative issues but also executive and judicial branch issues of current importance. It is funded by state appropriations and underwriting support from AT&T, the North Carolina Cable Television Association and other corporations and foundations.

"OPEN/net" has won awards for its innovative approach to public affairs television programming. The Ford Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government selected "OPEN/net" for the 1987 Innovations in State and Local Government Award. The Council of State Governments presented its 1986 Information Award to "OPEN/net."

Executive Director Lee Wing believes it is important to provide broader coverage than legislative floor debates. Most of the substantial legislative action, she notes, occurs in committees. Administrative hearings of executive branch agencies are other arenas of policy debate deserving of the public's attention. Since "OPEN/net" cannot cover everything, it "goes where the action is." Wing



explains that “part of the dynamic of ‘OPEN/net’ is to get the views of ordinary people.” Therefore, viewer call-ins are a major part of each program.

“OPEN/net” is shown from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Tuesday evenings. Wing is a proponent of live programming shown during prime time hours. “If we go through the effort of putting the program on satellite, it should be on prime time to reach as many viewers as possible.”

A broad-based committee provides oversight for selection of program topics. Members include representatives from the cable and broadcast industries, educational institutions and executive and legislative branches. An attempt is made to achieve political balance in scheduling programs.

“OPEN/net” is transmitted via satellite to cable systems throughout the state. It is a unique cooperative venture involving cable systems and a state agency. As many as 60 cable systems in the state have carried the program, reaching one-third of the population. When “OPEN/net” was forced to use a satellite that many cable systems did not receive, the number of cable systems carrying the program decreased. The Agency for Public Telecommunications now provides grant funds to assist cable systems in purchasing satellite dishes to receive the program, and the network is again expanding.

In 1988 the Agency for Public Telecommunications added a second evening of live interactive programs. “Do You Read Me” is targeted at adult literacy, and “State-to-State” brings officials together to discuss issues affecting all states. The latter is also carried by the Learning Channel, a national cable satellite network.<sup>9</sup>

### ***5. Customized Video Services for Legislators***

Many legislatures operate media services offices for the benefit of legislators, either on a partisan or nonpartisan basis. While most coordinate press conferences, issue news releases and serve as liaisons between legislators and the media, some maintain video production services. Legislative media services in Minnesota, Washington and New York, for example, provide staff and facilities to produce customized television programs, sometimes called electronic newsletters, for legislators to distribute to cable systems in their own districts. Illinois Information Services, an executive branch department, produces video programs to be televised on cable television and commercial broadcast stations in legislators’ districts.

#### ***a. Minnesota: Innovative Services for Senators***

Minnesota Senate Media Services produces individual cable reports for approximately one-fourth of its senators, those with large enough cable systems in their districts to reach a sizeable portion of their constituents. This service is in its third year of operation with plans to expand the number of participants. Media Services is a nonpartisan arm of the Senate.

Each senator chooses a title for his or her program. The program contains a lead-in and a follow-up by the senator. Pre-formatted program material, common to each of the senator’s reports, is sandwiched in the middle of the half-hour program. Senators also have the option to produce their own programs. One

program per senator is produced each month and shipped to the appropriate cable systems.

Senate Media Services also produces "Senate Journal," a weekly news summary and discussion program; "Capitol Call-In," a live call-in show aired weekly; and a variety of educational videotapes and public service announcements. In addition, it sponsors live news conferences via satellite in which television reporters from outlying areas of the state can interview senators without leaving their stations. Media Services Director Mark Nelson indicates that the smaller television stations have been especially receptive to these satellite-delivered news conferences.

Media Services coverage of Senate activities is noteworthy not only for programming diversity but also for the variety of transmission media it employs to reach the viewing public. Nelson estimates that 65% of the state's population can potentially view Media Services programs on cable systems in the Twin Cities area as well as on public and commercial broadcast stations in the state. According to Nelson, Minnesota is one of the few states in the nation in which legislatively-produced programming is aired regularly on commercial broadcast television.

Media Services began gavel-to-gavel coverage of Senate proceedings in 1988 on an experimental basis. Unedited coverage of floor proceedings is carried by cable systems to 250,000 households in the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul area by a microwave cable interconnect.<sup>10</sup> Media Services plans to expand its gavel-to-gavel coverage, perhaps to include selected committee hearings.

***b. The New York Assembly: A Long Tradition of Television and Radio Services***

The New York Assembly Office of Radio, Television and Photography produces 15-minute television programs for legislators titled "Assembly Update." Most legislators in upstate New York take advantage of the nonpartisan service. Programs are hosted by one of three media coordinators on the staff. Videotapes are either hand delivered or mailed by legislators to their cable systems. The service also produces customized radio programs from one to five minutes in length which are mailed to stations in legislators' districts. The Assembly's media services have been offered for over 12 years.

The Senate offers a similar service for radio and cable television. The radio service is by far the more active. Approximately six out of 61 senators prepare cable television programs of 15- to 30-minutes duration.

***6. In-House Closed-Circuit Video Monitoring***

In Florida, Kentucky, Virginia and Georgia, public television's full-time coverage of legislative proceedings doubles as an internal video monitoring system for the capitol. Although the gavel-to-gavel coverage is not broadcast to the public, capitol viewers can see legislative proceedings in action on one or two channels. More elaborate video monitoring systems can include internally generated text-only channels which contain announcements and schedule information. A further elaboration is the addition of the channels of the local cable

system. Perhaps the most sophisticated example of a multipurpose legislative monitoring system is the Canadian Parliament's 75-channel local area network. It combines video, audio and text-only channels as well as data transmission capabilities on one system.

Audio-only systems are more commonly used by state legislatures than video systems for monitoring legislative proceedings. The California State Legislature, for example, operates a multichannel audio system, called the "squawk box," which enables listeners to tune in to both chambers and all committee rooms. By subscribing to Capitol Audio News, a private service, anyone within reach of a touch-tone telephone can also access the "squawk box" by dialing a phone number and entering codes to "travel" from room to room.

In-house monitoring systems, whether audio or video, are particularly useful time-savers for the many individuals whose work is closely intertwined with the legislature—lobbyists and others testifying on legislation who need to know when specific bills will be discussed, state agency officials who must know when to walk to the capitol for department-related testimonies and debates, reporters covering legislative proceedings and, of course, legislators themselves who must keep abreast of debates and upcoming votes.

#### *a. Oregon's Multichannel In-House Cable System*

Oregon's gavel-to-gavel television coverage was initially developed solely for in-house use—to transmit legislative proceedings to monitors in the Capitol and 16 nearby state office buildings. House and Senate sessions as well as committee proceedings in three hearing rooms are televised each day during the six- to eight-month biennial session. Camera operators located in each chamber capture floor action when the House and Senate are in session. Remote-control cameras, operated from the control room in the Capitol, have been installed in three main committee rooms. Audio transmission is available from seven additional hearing rooms. The system is run by Legislative Media Services (LMS), a nonpartisan arm of the Legislature, and has been in operation for over 10 years.

LMS is experimenting with a voice-activated remote-control video system in one of its committee rooms. The system automatically switches the most appropriate camera (one of five cameras) to a committee member when he or she speaks into the microphone, alleviating the need for a technician to activate the switching mechanism from the control room. The experiment is studying the cost-effectiveness of a voice-activated video system, in particular, its potential to replace the audio archives with videotaped records of legislative proceedings.

LMS programs six legislative television channels and imports additional local broadcast signals to the closed-circuit system for a total of eleven channels available to Capitol-area viewers. The legislative channels contain a mix of video, audio and character-generated programming:

- a channel which covers the Senate in the morning and committee proceedings in the afternoon, usually the House Judiciary Committee and the House Labor Subcommittee;

- the House of Representatives channel which is shared with the committees that meet in Hearing Room F—Joint Ways and Means, House Agriculture and Natural Resources and House Business and Consumer Affairs;
- a channel dedicated to the committee proceedings held in Hearing Room A, primarily the Revenue Committee;
- an audio-only channel which presents a variety of committee hearings; also used to air videotape replays of past proceedings as requested by legislators;
- a channel dedicated primarily to outside news sources—the “video news clips” service, a compilation of network news segments containing the top stories of the previous day, taped and edited by LMS staff and aired four times each day; and C-SPAN, which is obtained directly from satellite and inserted into the channel line-up;
- and, the information channel, a character-generated feed which lists the schedule of the day’s events, updated several times each day.

LMS is staffed by four persons. It provides television services during each session, six to eight months every other year, with a biennial budget of \$300,000. During the interim, the department produces training videotapes for new interns and freshman legislators as well as other video materials.

During the 1989 legislative session, LMS conducted a pilot project to extend its gavel-to-gavel coverage to cable television viewers in the Portland area. Through a unique cooperative effort involving the Legislature, U.S. West Communications, Oregon Public Broadcasting and cable systems, legislative proceedings were available to approximately 150,000 cable television households. U.S. West Communications donated and installed a fiber optic cable from the Capitol to its headquarters in Salem. From there the television signal was transmitted by telephone to Portland where it was picked up by Oregon Public Broadcasting. The public television station donated its instructional television fixed service (ITFS) facility to transmit the signal by microwave to four cable companies in the Portland area.

The fledgling gavel-to-gavel service is called O-SPAN, according to LMS Manager Jennie Baglien. During the pilot project, O-SPAN televised legislative proceedings from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The programming day opened with the House or Senate and was followed by committee hearings. When a floor session or committee hearing could not be shown live because of schedule conflict, it was tape-delayed until later in the day.

To evaluate the pilot project, LMS flashed its toll-free telephone number and address on the screen and invited viewers to contact LMS with their opinions. According to Baglien, responses from legislators and viewers were overwhelmingly positive, prompting legislators from other parts of the state to request that O-SPAN be extended statewide. The pilot project, which ended in April, 1989, generated enough enthusiasm in gavel-to-gavel television to plan for long-term implementation of O-SPAN.



## **C. Other Approaches to Legislative Information: Radio, Audio Teleconferencing and Electronic Mail**

Although this study focuses on legislative television programming, non-video approaches in California and other states are worthy of note. The other media discussed here offer insights into the importance of immediacy (electronic mail), accessibility (radio) and interactivity (audio teleconferencing and electronic bulletin boards) to enhance legislator-constituent communications. They suggest applications for the California Channel in the not-too-distant future when the one-way medium of television is integrated with the interactive media of computer communications and teleconferencing.

### ***1. Radio: A History of Legislative News Coverage***

Public radio stations play a strong legislative news reporting role in many states. North Dakota, Ohio, Montana, Virginia, South Dakota, Alaska and Iowa are just a few states with active public radio coverage of legislative proceedings. In addition, state government media services often provide radio news services. Partisan and nonpartisan approaches alike are employed.

Illinois Information Services, a nonpartisan executive branch department service, provides a radio feed of government news. Radio stations call an 800 number to obtain a six- to eight-minute taped report containing a variety of legislative- and agency-related stories. Manager Donald Schlosser says the service is used by as many as 150 radio stations. He believes the service is especially valuable for rural radio stations which cannot afford news bureaus in the capital.

In California partisan-based legislative radio coverage is a tradition dating back twenty years, according to Spencer Tyler, Communications Director for the Office of the Senate Majority Whip (Democratic party). He covers committee and floor action, interviews legislators and prepares tapes that are transmitted by telephone to radio stations in legislators' districts. Over the years, his counterparts for the Senate and Assembly party caucuses have provided similar services.

### ***2. Audio Teleconferencing: Alaska's Approach***

The main purpose of state government media coverage is to inform viewers about important issues so they can better participate in the democratic process. The State of Alaska has taken this concept one step farther by developing an audio teleconferencing network that allows direct and frequent interactive contact between legislators and their constituents. Although this service is not television programming as such, it exemplifies the use of telecommunications technologies to increase citizens' knowledge of, and participation in, statewide policy issues. In a state with significant geographic barriers, Alaska's use of telecommunications technologies has effectively promoted citizen participation in state government for its 400,000 residents.

The audio teleconferencing system has been funded by the Alaska Legislature since 1978. Equipment is housed in 17 Legislative Information Offices and 54 Audio Teleconference Centers located throughout the state. Audio teleconferencing via speaker-phones and a bridge system is used for three types of meetings: public hearings in which citizens in outlying areas can present



testimony to legislative committees without traveling to Juneau, the state capital; constituent meetings which provide informal exchanges between legislators and people in their districts, usually held in the evenings; and legislative business meetings. One Fairbanks legislator has extended his constituent teleconferences by airing them on the local public radio station. During the 1986 legislative session, approximately 600 teleconferences were held, attended by 19,000 people. Executive branch agencies and other groups are able to use the teleconference system when it is not in use by the Legislature.<sup>11</sup>

### ***3. Reaching Out Via Computer Communications***

Nearly 25% of American homes are equipped with personal computers. Of these, one in six are estimated to have modems that use telephone lines to allow computer-to-computer communications. An increasing number of government agencies at the local, state and national levels are taking advantage of this growing network of computer users by implementing computer-based services to provide information and offer interactive communications between citizens and government officials.

Some government agencies have established electronic bulletin boards to post notices about services, job opportunities, upcoming meetings and minutes from recent public meetings. Electronic mail services enable messages to be exchanged virtually instantaneously by computer, bypassing the slower paper-based postal service altogether. Computer conferences are convened to allow more extensive discussions of public policy issues. Participants, both citizens and public officials alike, join discussion groups to explore specific topics in depth. A major advantage of all these computer services is asynchronous communications. Users are able to interact without being engaged simultaneously.<sup>12</sup>

Alaska supplements its audio teleconferencing system with an electronic mail service to further encourage communications between legislators and their constituents. Each Legislative Information Office is equipped with electronic mail systems which enable constituents to rapidly transmit "public opinion messages," called POMs, to legislators. Nearly 14,000 electronic mail messages were transmitted in 1986.

The California Assembly Committee on Utilities and Commerce initiated the Capitol Connection in 1987 as "an experiment in the use of technology to bring legislators and citizens together."<sup>13</sup> Individuals with personal computers used telephone modems to dial into the electronic bulletin board in Sacramento. They participated in computer conferences in order to be brought up to date on key telecommunications legislation and to enter into discussions with other conferees on timely and provocative policy issues. As of December 1987, over 700 people had joined the Capitol Connection network. The experiment ended in 1988 with plans to improve its access capabilities and re-open it at a later date.

## **D. The Impact of State Public Affairs Television Programming**

Government officials and program producers faced with the decision to air new public affairs television programs often question if anyone will watch. Proposals to televise legislative proceedings elicit additional concerns from

legislators about the effects on the legislative process and need to present impartial coverage. The states featured in this chapter have found a number of means to address these concerns.

### ***1. The Program Audience***

Few program producers interviewed for this study have conducted formal surveys to determine viewership patterns of their legislative programming. Some producers argue that they need to supply such public affairs programming no matter how many people watch it. They believe it inappropriate to subject such programming to the "ratings game." Others assume that their viewers fit the national demographic patterns of C-SPAN's viewers. (See Chapter 3, "C-SPAN.")

The surveys conducted by Kentucky, Florida and Nebraska public television stations, therefore, are of particular interest. Although they represent only a small portion of state legislative programming, their surveys indicate that viewers tend to be more politically active, well-educated and affluent than non-viewers—findings similar to C-SPAN viewership studies.

#### ***a. KET Coverage of Kentucky's General Assembly***

A 1984 viewership survey of Kentucky Educational Television's (KET) legislative programming showed that 24% of the state's population watched some portion of the coverage. More males than females watched KET's coverage, and viewing was highest among those from 41 to 65 years of age. Sixty-five percent of those with post-graduate educations reported viewing, compared with 17% of those with zero to four years of college education.

Persons with higher income levels were more frequent viewers of KET legislative programming. Forty-four percent of those with incomes over \$30,000 watched some portion, compared with 18% of those with incomes from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Twice as many registered voters (38%) viewed the programming as non-registered voters (16%). Viewing was greatest in suburbs and small towns at 36%, with significantly less viewing reported in city homes (25%).<sup>14</sup>

#### ***b. Florida's "Today in the Legislature"***

A 1982 study of Florida's [then] seven public television markets showed that viewers of "Today in the Legislature" are better educated than the general population. They usually have professional graduate degrees (one-third have post-graduate degrees) and a high interest in public affairs. They are politically active, with 69% voting in the last election and 33% working for a candidate. Of the survey participants, 30% were aware of "Today in the Legislature," and 14% viewed specific programs. Viewers said their main reason for watching "Today in the Legislature" was to gain news and information about the Legislature.<sup>15</sup>

#### ***c. Nebraska's "Capitol View"***

A 1982 study of "Capitol View," Nebraska Educational Television's weekly legislative news program, revealed that one in five Nebraskans watched the program with some regularity. Viewership was highest in Lincoln, the capital, at 30%, whereas Omaha, the major metropolitan area, showed a smaller viewership rate at 12%. Half of the viewers indicated they watched "Capitol View" in order to

get interpretations and overviews of what is happening in the Legislature. One-third said the program supplied most of their information about the Legislature.

Viewers were, expectedly, more interested in the actions of the Legislature than non-viewers and were also more likely to vote in elections. Non-viewers indicated they would be more likely to watch legislative coverage if they understood government processes better and if they felt that legislative actions affected them more directly.<sup>16</sup>

## ***2. Effects on the Legislative Process***

Prior to the initiation of televised legislative coverage—especially gavel-to-gavel coverage—legislators commonly express concern about the potential effects on the legislative process. Will legislators take advantage of the camera by grandstanding? Will speeches become lengthier as legislators vie for the camera's eye? Will debates become stifled and less spontaneous?

In general, these concerns have not been as problematic as legislators originally feared, either in the states highlighted in this chapter or the U.S. House and Senate. (See Chapter 3.) The most common effect reported by program producers relative to legislative decorum is relatively benign: legislators begin to dress for the camera.

Where implemented, regulations to limit nonproductive behavior have generally been effective in reducing grandstanding. These include time limits on speeches and guidelines indicating where cameras can be pointed and what types of camera angles can be used. One producer indicated that camera operators simply do not emphasize coverage of overt grandstanding. Once legislators realize this, the behavior stops. (The latter example comes from a state that does not provide gavel-to-gavel coverage to the public but summarizes the day's events in a news program.)

A 1982 study conducted for Florida Public Television's "Today in the Legislature" lends support to the idea that awareness of the presence of cameras gradually diminishes as legislators become more comfortable with them. Nearly 60% of the legislators said the presence of cameras did not affect their behavior, the highest number claiming "no effect" in recent years. In the same study, most Florida legislators concluded that grandstanding was exhibited by only a "minority of their peers."<sup>17</sup>

The principal reason for televising the state legislature and other activities of state government is, of course, to increase citizen awareness of public policy issues and better enable them to participate in the democratic process. On an anecdotal level, television coverage appears to promote constituent communications with their elected representatives. Nearly all producers interviewed for this study reported that legislators immediately noticed increased feedback from constituents once televised coverage began.

Does the availability of legislative television programming stimulate political participation, or are politically active individuals drawn to legislative programming? None of the studies conducted by the states or C-SPAN shows a *direct* link between televised legislative coverage and increased political participation by the

viewing public. C-SPAN surveys indicate that approximately twice as many C-SPAN viewers vote as the national average. Surveys in Kentucky, Florida and Nebraska have also concluded that viewers of state legislative television programming are more likely to be politically active than non-viewers. However, this report uncovered no studies that conclusively solve the chicken and egg puzzle between viewership and political participation. The existing viewership surveys no doubt reflect both effects.

### ***3. Safeguards Against Bias and Influence: Television Rules and Regulations***

Producers of legislative news and analysis programs are uniformly adamant about the need for balanced legislative coverage. Yet few states have found the need to institute formal mechanisms or administrative structures to guard against bias. Producers cite the strong tradition of journalistic ethics as the best safeguard against unbalanced coverage, stating that the program simply would not survive if it showed the slightest hint of bias. Rather, they are guided by the necessity of maintaining a good working relationship with the legislature. Many producers said, for example, that they would not show footage of legislators reading newspapers or dozing at their desks.

North Carolina's "OPEN/net" takes a unique approach to achieving journalistic balance by placing programming oversight in the hands of a committee composed of representatives from a number of organizations and points of view. The committee oversees the selection of topics and panel members and ensures that political balance is achieved from program to program.

States providing gavel-to-gavel coverage can sidestep the bias issue by simply allowing the cameras to roll, thereby avoiding editing and summarizing altogether. Despite this outwardly simple solution to the issue of bias, most legislative bodies with gavel-to-gavel coverage, both national and state, have formulated rules regarding the operation of cameras.

Some state and national legislative bodies which televise gavel-to-gavel proceedings draft contracts which spell out guidelines for coverage. The contract between WGBH/WGBX public television and the Massachusetts Legislature, for example, specifies that the camera can only be aimed at the Speaker's dais and the members' rostrum.<sup>18</sup> The Canadian Parliament allows only head-and-shoulders shots of the person recognized by the Speaker and prohibits panning and wide angle shots. Both the U.S. House and Senate have rules similar to the Parliament's. Congress allows panning and cutaways only on special occasions, such as ceremonial events and speeches by foreign heads of state.

Minnesota and Rhode Island, on the other hand, have adopted the roving camera approach in their gavel-to-gavel coverage. This practice enables the camera to capture additional action in the legislative chamber, breaking the monotony of head-and-shoulders shots. Minnesota Senate Media Services Director Mark Nelson stresses that cutaways show senators working or talking on the floor and not "people reading the newspaper."<sup>19</sup> In both Minnesota and Oregon, camera operators occasionally employ the split screen to highlight legislators in debate, an approach prohibited in some legislative chambers.



Most states prohibit the use of television footage for political campaigns, similar to U.S. House and Senate rules. Whether public affairs coverage is generated by public television stations, a private contractor or the legislature itself, most states allow commercial stations to use the feeds as long as they give the originating service credit for the footage.

The Florida Legislature, however, does not allow commercial stations to use material from its daily news program. In litigation initiated and lost by local broadcasters in the early 1980s, a Florida circuit court ruled that the Legislature's video signal is not a public record but that video tapes are. The Legislature responded to the ruling by passing a law which makes video tapes exempt from the public records statute.<sup>20</sup>

While production practices vary from state to state, all producers interviewed for this study emphasize the importance of providing professional broadcast quality programming. Viewers are accustomed to seeing high quality production on both commercial and public television. They will accept nothing less in legislative public affairs programming.

## **E. Conclusions: The Growth of Legislative Television Programming**

This chapter's review of the 50 states illustrates the wide variety of state public affairs programming available to television viewers throughout the country. California is near the bottom of all states in the amount of legislative television coverage reaching its citizens.

Each state is unique in the type and amount of legislative programming available to its television viewers—ranging from daily 90 second news updates to 12 hours per day of unedited gavel-to-gavel coverage. Despite the diversity of public affairs television practices among the states, a few trends are evident.

*Public television, the leader in legislative coverage.* In every state of the nation, public television stations provide some form of television coverage of state public affairs issues. Public television programming in 36 states focuses on the state legislature through regular news programs, roundtable discussions and viewer call-in shows. Viewers in 30 states, including California, can watch programs on broader state public policy issues that occasionally include legislative issues. News magazines, panel discussions and documentaries are the most common formats for these public policy programs. California's public television coverage of legislative issues is minimal, due in large part to the lack of state funding of public broadcasting. (See Chapter 1, "Need.") California is one of only two states in the nation which does not appropriate funds to public television programming (Texas is the other).

Gavel-to-gavel coverage is not a common programming format among public television stations because it requires the dedication of many hours of air time per day. The California Channel study identified three states, however, where public television stations are instrumental in bringing gavel-to-gavel programming to their viewers. Nebraska Educational Television provides gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Legislature's unicameral proceedings on its own cable channel, available to viewers in Lincoln and Omaha. Massachusetts public television station WGBH



broadcasts House proceedings on its sister UHF station, WGBX. The full House sessions are carried to other public television stations in the state by microwave. Oregon Public Television donated its microwave facility to transmit a daily legislative feed to Portland area cable systems during a 1989 pilot project. Several other public television stations air extended excerpts of legislative proceedings on a modified gavel-to-gavel basis—notably, Kentucky, South Dakota, Virginia and Georgia.

*Innovative uses of cable television for state legislative programming.* The use of cable television to distribute legislative proceedings of the U.S. Congress dates back to 1979 with the inauguration of C-SPAN. Local government proceedings have been cablecast on municipal access channels in many communities throughout the nation since the early 1970s. The practice of cablecasting city council meetings is growing as franchises are renewed and access channel requirements are strengthened. The use of cable systems to distribute *state* legislative programming, although less common, is growing.

The medium of cable television has two advantages over broadcast television for the delivery of legislative programming: multiple channel capacity and narrowcasting, the ability to reach specialized and localized audiences. Whereas public and commercial broadcast stations have only one channel to fill with programming, cable television systems typically carry at least 36 channels, and many have more than 50. In fact, of the six states with gavel-to-gavel programming, five distribute it by cable television. (Massachusetts is the only state identified by this study in which gavel-to-gavel proceedings are transmitted over the airwaves by public broadcast television.)

Legislators are learning the value of narrowcasting to communicate efficiently with their constituents. Because cable systems serve relatively localized areas, legislators can produce video programs tailored to their own districts. Electronic newsletters customized to the concerns of constituents in legislators' districts are becoming more common. Minnesota, New York, Illinois, Washington and Florida are examples of states where legislators communicate with their constituents by cable television.

Statewide distribution of legislative programming by cable television is hampered in most states by the lack of an interconnection linking all systems. A few states—notably, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Florida—use either microwave or satellite systems to distribute legislative programming to a large number of cable systems. Rhode Island state government programs a government access channel with the gavel-to-gavel proceedings of its House and Senate, reaching a majority of the state's cable systems via microwave. The Cable Television Network of New Jersey transmits a variety of public affairs programming to cable systems statewide by a microwave system owned by cable operators. The Florida Cable Television Association reaches two-thirds of the state's cable households with legislative programs via the satellite delivery system of the Sunshine Network, owned in part by Florida cable operators.

*Cooperative approaches to new programming services.* As states experiment with gavel-to-gavel and other innovative program formats, many are exploring collaborative approaches to producing, funding and distributing public affairs

programming. In North Carolina a state agency produces a weekly public policy discussion and viewer call-in program which is delivered to viewers by cable television systems. The New Jersey Cable Television Network and the state's public television network jointly produce a monthly program which covers a legislative hearing in full, distributed to cable systems throughout the state. Oregon's Legislature collaborated with the U.S. West telephone company, Oregon Public Broadcasting and cable systems to conduct a pilot project on gavel-to-gavel coverage. By spreading the responsibility beyond one organization, cooperative approaches such as these have successfully launched new public affairs programming services that typically involve costly and technically complex distribution systems.

*Increased interest in gavel-to-gavel programming.* This study has identified six states which provide some form of gavel-to-gavel coverage—New York, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Oregon, Nebraska and Massachusetts—and others which take a partial gavel-to-gavel approach. Several more are exploring the development of gavel-to-gavel state legislative television services. A recent Washington state study explored a wide variety of ways in which video technology could increase citizens's access to the Legislature and state government services. The Pennsylvania Senate passed a resolution in 1989 which authorizes television and radio coverage of its proceedings and makes it available for distribution by television and radio stations as well as cable systems.

In states where successful gavel-to-gavel experiments have been conducted, increased coverage has been proposed. NY-SCAN recommends expansion of its gavel-to-gavel coverage to include legislative floor debates and to reach cable systems throughout the state. In Oregon, where gavel-to-gavel legislative television was cablecast only to the Portland area during a 1989 pilot project, proponents are also pushing to expand its coverage statewide. And in Massachusetts, the Senate is considering following the House's lead by opening its chamber to television coverage.

The sentiment expressed by many individuals interviewed for this report is that "the time has come" television coverage of state legislative proceedings is "inevitable." A strong precedent has been set by C-SPAN which reaches 43 million cable television households in every state in the nation. Cable systems' local origination and government access channels are coming of age, with an increasing number of systems carrying televised coverage of city council and county commission meetings. In short, citizens are beginning to expect government proceedings on television.

**Table 4.3**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

This table identifies television coverage of state legislative activities (L) produced by public television stations and, when known, state government agencies and cable television systems. Broader statewide public affairs programming (P) is also identified, particularly where programs include some legislative coverage.

Information was gathered from two sources. The National Conference of State Legislatures compiled a list of public television legislative coverage in 1984, revised in 1986. The California Channel project further updated the NCSL list in 1987-1988 and added entries for television coverage produced by organizations other than public television stations.

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	Educational Television Commission	For the Record	daily	L
<b>Alaska</b>	KAKM-Alaska Public Television	Capitol 89 (title varies)	daily	L agency may vary depending on bid award
<b>Arizona</b>	KAET-TV-Arizona State Univ.	Horizons	daily	P, L during session
<b>Arkansas</b>	Educational Television Commission	Arkansas Week	weekly	L
<b>California</b>	KQED-San Francisco Public TV	Express	weekly	P
	KCET-Los Angeles Public TV	California Stories	weekly	P
		KCET Journal	4 per year	P
<b>Colorado</b>	KRMA-Denver Council for Public TV	Stateline	weekly	L
<b>Connecticut</b>	Educational Television Corp.	Connecticut Lawmaker	weekly	L
<b>Delaware</b>	WHYY-Wilmington Public TV	Capitol Comments	Monday & Friday	L
<b>Florida</b>	Florida Public Broadcasting	Today in the Legislature	daily	L
		Week in Review	weekly	L also in Spanish
		For the People	weekly (5 min.)	P
	Florida Cable TV Assoc.	The Governor Meets the Press	monthly	L P distributed statewide to cable systems on Sunshine Network
<b>Georgia</b>	Georgia Public Telecomm. Commission	The Lawmakers	daily	L
		Capitol Hill Report		P aired when legislature is in recess

**Table 4.3, continued**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Hawaii</b>	Public Broadcast- ing Authority	Capitol Spotlight	daily (5 min.)	L also opening day ceremony and gov. state-of-the-state
		Dialog	weekly	P L call-in program
<b>Idaho</b>	Idaho Educational Broadcasting	Idaho Report	daily	L
<b>Illinois</b>	Illinois Public Broadcasting Council	Illinois Lawmakers	6-8 programs per session	L
		Illinois Press	weekly	P
	Illinois Dept. of Info. Services	Report from Springfield	ad hoc	L customized video programs for legislators
<b>Indiana</b>	WFYI-Indianapolis Public Broadcasting	Indiana Lawmakers	daily	L
<b>Iowa</b>	Iowa Public Broad- casting Board	Iowa Press	weekly	P
<b>Kansas</b>	KTWU-Topeka Washburn Univ.	It's Your Turn	weekly	P L call-in program
<b>Kentucky</b>	Kentucky Educa- tional Television	Kentucky General Assembly in Open Session	daily	L 30-90 min. daily, edited legislative proceedings
		Comment on Kentucky	weekly	P, L during session
		This Is Kentucky	weekly	P call-in program
<b>Louisiana</b>	Educational Tele- vision Authority	The State We're In	daily	L
<b>Maine</b>	WMED-University of Maine	Maine Reporter's Notebook	weekly	P, L during session
		Call Your Legislator	monthly	L
<b>Maryland</b>	Center for Public Broadcasting	State Circle	weekly	L 16 weeks/year
		Maryland Week	weekly	P 52 weeks/year
<b>Massachu- setts</b>	WGBX-WGBH Educ. Foundation	Gavel-to-Gavel	gavel-to gavel	L House and selected committees

**Table 4.3, continued**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Michigan</b>	WKAR-Michigan State Univ.	Off the Record	weekly	P
		Evening with the Governor	annual	L P gov. state of the state also aired
		title varies	2-4/year	L documentaries and call-in programs on key issues
<b>Minnesota</b>	Senate Media Services	Senate Journal	weekly	L
		Capitol Call-In	weekly	L
		cable reports (title varies)	monthly	L customized senator reports for cable systs.
		no title	gavel-to-gavel	L Senate proceedings via Twin Cities cable interconnect
	Twin Cities Public TV, Inc.	Almanac	weekly	P
<b>Mississippi</b>	Authority for Educational Television	Quorum	weekly	L
<b>Missouri</b>	KETC Public TV-St. Louis	Postscript	weekly	P African-American focus
		Highway 40	weekly	P
	KCPT Public TV-Kansas City	Kansas City Illustrated	weekly	P
		"Hoy" Kansas City	weekly	P Hispanic focus, in English and Spanish
<b>Montana</b>	KUSM Public TV-Bozeman	Debates '88	ad hoc	L primary and general election coverage
	Montana Cable TV Assoc.	title varies	ad hoc	L gov. state of the state address, legislator interviews
<b>Nebraska</b>	Educational Telecommunications Commission	Capitol View	weekly	L
		Dateline Nebraska	weekly	P call-ins twice monthly
		no title	gavel-to-gavel	L unicameral floor proceedings via area cable systems
<b>Nevada</b>	KNPP Public Broadcasting	Silver State	weekly	P, L during session



**Table 4.3, continued**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Continental Cable-vision / Yankee Cable Network	State of the State	weekly	L P distributed state-wide to cable local origination channels
	New Hampshire Public TV	New Hampshire Journal	weekly	P
<b>New Jersey</b>	WNJJ-New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority	On the Record	weekly	P, L during session
		Front Page NJ	weekly	P, some L during sess.
		NJ Network	daily	P
		Another View	weekly	P African-American focus
		Images Imagines	weekly	P Hispanic focus, in English and Spanish
		title varies	annual	L gov. state of the state and budget messages
	Cable TV Network of New Jersey	Gavel-to-Gavel	monthly	L selected committee hearings televised in full via statewide cable inter-connect; cooperative project with public TV
<b>New Mexico</b>	KNME-Univ. of New Mexico	On Assignment	weekly	P, some L during session
		At Week's End	weekly	L state and national focus
<b>New York</b>	NY Assembly and Senate communications offices	title varies	weekly and monthly	L customized video reports for legislators' local cable systems
	NY State Commission on Cable Television-NY-SCAN	title varies	gavel-to-gavel	L P gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative hearings and the Court of Appeals; on cable systems
	WMHT-Schenectady Council on ETV	Inside Albany	weekly	L
<b>North Carolina</b>	NC Agency for Public Telecommunications	OPEN/net	weekly	L P transmitted by satellite to cable systems statewide
	Univ. of NC Center for Public TV	Legislative Report	4 days/week	L
		NC This Week	weekly	P
		NC People	weekly	P
		Stateline	weekly	P aired when legislature is in recess

**Table 4.3, continued**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>North Dakota</b>	Prairie Public Broadcasting	Governing North Dakota	weekly	L
<b>Ohio</b>	Ohio Public Radio-TV Statehouse Bur.	Ohio Newsbreak	daily (90 sec.)	P, L during session
		Issues Ohio: Special Report	4/year	L P gov. call-in programs
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Educational Television Authority	Legislative Week in Review	weekly	L
<b>Oregon</b>	Oregon Public Broadcasting	Statehouse	daily (5 min.)	L
		Front Street Weekly	weekly	P
	Oregon Legislative Media Services	"O-SPAN"	gavel-to-gavel	L House and Senate floor sessions and committee hearings via Portland area cable TV
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	WITF-Harrisburg Public Broadcasting	The State of Pennsylvania	weekly	L
	WQED-Pittsburgh Public Broadcasting	The People's Business	weekly	L
<b>Rhode Island</b>	WSBE-Public Telecommunications Auth.	Statehouse Report	weekly	L
	Legislative Radio-TV Office	Capitol Television	gavel-to-gavel	L House and Senate sessions via statewide cable interconnect
		Capitol Update	weekly	L
		Capitol Call-In	weekly	L
<b>South Carolina</b>	Educational Television Commission	Statehouse Week	weekly	L
<b>South Dakota</b>	South Dakota Public Television	Statehouse	daily	L
		Online	weekly	P call-in program
<b>Tennessee</b>	Viacom Cablevision-Nashville	State of Our State State	weekly	L on cable local origination channel
	WCTE Public TV-Cookeville	Legislative Viewpoint	weekly	L during session
	WTCI Public TV-Chattanooga	Legislative Report	weekly	L during session

**Table 4.3, continued**  
**State Legislative and Public Affairs Television Coverage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Texas</b>	Austin Cablevision (ATC)	Delegation	monthly	L on cable local origination channel
		Interview Point	monthly	L
	KLRU-Texas Public Telecomm.	Texas Politics	weekly	P
		The Governor Reports	monthly	L P call-in program
<b>Utah</b>	KUED-Univ. of Utah	Civic Dialogue	weekly	P
<b>Vermont</b>	Vermont Educational Television	Vermont Report	weekly	P, L during session
		Vermont This Week	weekly	P, some L during session
<b>Virginia</b>	WNVC/WNVT Central Virginia Educ. TV Corp.	Virginia Legislature	daily	L Senate only
		Virginia Legislature: The Week	weekly	L
		Making Virginia Laws	weekly	L
		Capitol Events	daily	L
		Richmond Report: The Week	weekly	P
<b>Washington</b>	KCTS Public TV-Seattle	Inside	weekly	P
	House Democratic Media Services	title varies	ad hoc	L customized video reports for legislators' local cable systems
<b>West Virginia</b>	W. Virginia Educ. Broadcasting Auth.	State Wide	weekly	P, L during session
<b>Wisconsin</b>	WHA-Educational Communications Bd.	Legislature/89	daily	L June only
		Wisconsin Magazine	weekly	P
<b>Wyoming</b>	KCWC-Central Wyoming College	title varies	ad hoc	L legislative call-in and gov. state of the state

## NOTES

1. The few regular public affairs television programs which occasionally discuss California legislative issues are produced by public television stations in Los Angeles and San Francisco—weekly documentary- and magazine-style programs on statewide public policy issues that include legislative topics on an irregular basis when they are relevant to the featured issue. KQED-San Francisco's "Express" and KCET-Los Angeles' "California Stories" and "7:30" include state legislative issues on an irregular basis.
2. Public television stations in 18 states are authorized as state licensees: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia. Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands also have state public television stations. Source: Strack, Irene Lydia, ed. *Public Broadcasting Directory, 1987–1988*. Washington, DC: Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1987.
3. Stratton, Catherine. "Florida Cable Association Gets Own Studios." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 11 (March 13, 1989): 16.
4. Interview with Mary McDonnough, Legislative Assistant, National Association of Public Television Stations, Washington, DC, April 1989.
5. Rhode Island is divided into twelve cable service areas, with some cable operators serving more than one area. Source: Laurence Walsh, General Manager, Rhode Island Radio-Television Office, Providence, RI.
6. Moore, Brian E. "At Home with the House: A Study of Televised Coverage in the Massachusetts House of Representatives." Report prepared for the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Boston, MA, 1986.
7. Moore, see note above.
8. Florida Supreme Court proceedings are videotaped in full for university law school use. They are available to broadcasters who can excerpt segments for newscasts. Although some high-interest proceedings have been aired in full, they generally are not televised on a regular gavel-to-gavel basis. Source: Ernie Schultz, President, Radio-TV News Directors Association, Washington, DC.
9. Additional information about North Carolina's "OPEN/net" program can be found in: Arterton, F. Christopher. *Teledemocracy: Can Technology Protect Democracy?* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987.
10. Maloney, Chris. "Minnesota Senate Creates 'M-SPAN.'" *C-SPAN Update* 6, no. 18 (May 2, 1988): 3.
11. Additional information about Alaska's use of audio teleconferencing can be found in: Arterton, see note above.
12. Arterton, see note above.  
For a description of an ambitious local government use of computer communications, see: Wilkinson, Tracy. "Santa Monica Gets Wired: Computer Link to Citizens." *Los Angeles Times* (February 21, 1989): I-1.  
See also "Information Technologies and Governance," a report prepared for the U.S. Congress by the Office of Technology Assessment, Communications and Technologies Program, due to be published September 1989.

13. From "Welcome to the Capitol Connection," the user's guide to the electronic bulletin board of the California Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee, Gwen Moore, Chairwoman.
14. "UK Survey Research Center's Spring 1984 State Survey." Memorandum on Kentucky Educational Television, Lexington, KY, May 1984.
15. LeRoy, David J. "Today in the Legislature' Study." Draft report, Florida International University, Tallahassee, FL, 1982.
16. From a memorandum summarizing the 1982 viewership study of Nebraska Educational Television's "Capitol View," by Julie Jorgensen, September 1982.
17. Leroy, see note above.
18. From *WGBH Operations Contract*, 1985-1986.
19. Maloney, Chris. "Minnesota Senate Television Opens Its First Session." *C-SPAN Update* 6, no. 18 (May 2, 1988): 11.
20. Source: John Thomas, Executive Producer, Florida Public Television, Tallahassee FL, June 1987, and March 1988. Litigation was in Leon County Circuit Court, Judge Victor Cawthon. The public records law is Florida Statute 119.0115.



## **Chapter 5**

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# **Gavel-to-Gavel Television Systems in Canada and Australia**

Television coverage of government proceedings throughout the world is increasing as more and more national legislatures open their doors to television cameras. Today 59 countries permit broadcast coverage of legislative sessions. Of these, 15 countries provide full-time coverage. West Germany was the first country to broadcast its legislature in 1949. The most recent entry is the Soviet Union which began airing its Congress of People's Deputies on the national television network in May 1989. Great Britain will join the ranks in November 1989 when the House of Commons permits televised coverage on an experimental basis.<sup>1</sup>

Parliamentary television systems in Canada and Australia present useful models for the proposed California public affairs network. Besides having a long history of televising legislative proceedings relative to systems in the United States, they have also pioneered innovative uses of video and computer technologies.

The systems discussed in this chapter—the Canadian House of Commons, the Ontario Legislative Assembly and the Australian Parliament—use remote-controlled and computer-assisted video operations to televise legislative

proceedings. In addition to distributing the feed to the public, they have also developed extensive internal video monitoring systems for use by parliamentary members and their staffs.

As the pioneer in gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage, the Canadian Parliament's live unedited coverage of the House of Commons in Ottawa preceded C-SPAN by two years. In recent years, the Parliament has also developed a large-scale internal video information system for its members. OASIS, a 75-channel cable system combines video, audio and data on a local area network for internal monitoring within the Parliamentary complex. It is in the vanguard of modern legislative information systems.

The legislatures of three Canadian provinces—Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan—provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of their assembly proceedings on cable television systems. The Ontario parliamentary system, inaugurated in 1986, offers gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Legislative Assembly and selected committees using the latest in remote-control television technology. It also programs a multichannel internal video information system for members and staff.

The world's most modern parliament building, the Australian Parliament which opened in 1988, will chart even newer territory in televising legislative proceedings. It has been built around the concept of maximum public access to the democratic process and includes video coverage of proceedings in the House and Senate, committees and ceremonial areas.

These parliamentary systems use remote-controlled cameras to record an electronic *Hansard* of legislative proceedings (equivalent to the *Congressional Record* of the U.S. Congress). In Canada cable systems show live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel proceedings in full, with commercial and public network news operations drawing extensively from segments of the coverage.

## **A. The Canadian Parliament: First System in North America**

The Canadian Parliament's Broadcasting Service combines two components: a gavel-to-gavel television service for external distribution to the public and an extensive internal information system for use by Parliament's members and staff.

### ***1. Gavel-to-Gavel System***

When the corridors outside the House chambers (the press "scrum") became more the focus for debates than the floor itself, Parliament concluded that televising the sessions would bring government back onto the floor. The House of Commons commissioned a study which recommended that the sessions be televised, that cameras be inconspicuous, that professional color broadcast quality facilities be installed and that the video service be interconnected to broadcast and cable television.<sup>2</sup>

The House of Commons of the Canadian Parliament has provided gavel-to-gavel video coverage of its proceedings since 1977, preceding the United States' C-SPAN by two years. Since then its service has been studied by the United States, Australia and Great Britain before they embarked on their own systems.

Parliament installed eight remote-controlled cameras, an audio system, additional lighting and a control room in the House.<sup>3</sup> The appropriate camera, switched by a technician in the control room, shows only the person who is recognized by the Speaker, a practice called the "Speaker's eye." There are no cut-away or reaction shots, and only head and shoulder shots are allowed. These gavel-to-gavel televised proceedings generate a complete audio and video record of debates in the House, called an electronic *Hansard*, similar to the *Congressional Record* of the U.S. Congress. Three audio feeds are produced—one English, one French and a floor feed. Television coverage of the Senate and Parliamentary committees is not provided. They are, however, monitored with audio feeds.

Gavel-to-gavel proceedings are transmitted seven hours per day, 28 hours per week, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Transmission of the signal occurs in three stages. First, the House of Commons Broadcasting Service produces the live signal and provides explanatory graphics. Second, the Canadian Broadcast Corporation—which has the license to distribute the signal as the "CBC Parliamentary Network"—takes the feed and packages it for distribution to the public. A CBC announcer puts "heads and tails" on the feed by introducing and summarizing each day's proceedings. The signal is acquired from the House of Commons Broadcasting Services on telephone lines rented by the CBC. Finally, the signal is uplinked to the satellite Anik D1 and distributed to over 400 cable systems which can potentially reach 85% of the Canadian population.<sup>4</sup> The transmission is also used extensively by commercial broadcast television and radio as inserts for news programs.

Cable systems are not required to carry the CBC Parliamentary Network. There is no charge to cable companies or subscribers for the services. If cable systems have sufficient channel capacity and the appropriate satellite downlink, most will carry it as a public service or because of encouragement from their legislators.

The most important effect of gavel-to-gavel television has been to move the legislative action back into the chamber. Proceedings are not as casual as in pre-television days, and the tradition of "slamming" (pounding the desk) has been replaced with applause. Although the "Speaker's eye" approach controls the use of the camera, members know how the cameras work and can grandstand to some degree. According to Ivan Barclay, Chief of Broadcasting Service, technicians must be politically savvy to House protocols in order to avoid non-approved uses of television coverage.

Another important effect has been the public's increased awareness of Parliamentary proceedings. A 1983 survey concluded that 50% of cable viewers watched gavel-to-gavel proceedings at one time or another—either on the live feed or by seeing clips on network news programs. Ten percent said they had seen the live feed, and 54% recognized the feed and its source. Barclay says that a day rarely goes by when clips from the House of Commons are not used by the networks as part of their regular news programs.

Proposals are now being considered to form a new Canadian Parliamentary Channel (CPaC), modeled on C-SPAN. In addition to House of Commons proceedings, it would cover conventions and conferences, produce viewer call-in

shows and offer excerpts from provincial legislative proceedings. The cable industry will provide start up funds and subscriber fees will cover operational costs. The new channel is planned to start in September 1990.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. OASIS Information System**

Prior to 1983, the electric typewriter was the most sophisticated office technology used by most members and their staffs. With the installation of OASIS, members can now access a broadband local area network (closed-circuit cable system) which combines audio, video and data signals to obtain a number of information resources.

OASIS was installed to enhance the ability of members to use a variety of information sources, to improve communications among members, staff and constituents and to increase the productivity of office automation tasks. OASIS combines a number of communications signals, including the gavel-to-gavel feeds, into one system, accessible on television monitors located in the buildings of the Parliamentary complex. A small-scale pilot network was tested from 1981 to 1982, and more extensive systems were installed in Parliament Hill buildings from 1983 to 1985.<sup>6</sup>

OASIS stands for Office Automation Services and Information Systems. This local area network (LAN) is distributed via double bi-directional cable to Parliament and nearby buildings. It currently has 99 channels, 75 of which are used.<sup>7</sup> Members and staff can monitor government proceedings on a variety of video and audio channels:

- three House of Commons video channels—floor sound, English and French;
- proceedings of the Senate available as an audio channel;
- committee information and projected order of business on two channels for each, both in English and French (character-generated);
- a party channel used by the Government Party whip to deliver information to party members (character-generated);
- an audio monitoring system for 22 committees carried on OASIS by an FM radio system; and
- a video channel for press conferences.

Several channels are available with programming tailored to members' interests:

- a composite news program created each morning by the Broadcasting Service staff, called "VideoQuorum"—news stories from several commercial broadcasts which are edited into 20-minute French and English summaries each morning, popular with members and staff who want an overview of the major events from the previous day;
- a channel dedicated to a variety of public affairs programs, recorded (with permission) from six networks by Broadcasting Service and played two to three times a week;

- eight channels set aside for “demand” viewing—replays of specific news stories or debates requested by members (a popular service which receives about 25 such requests per day from the 283 member body).

In addition, several channels are imported from other programming sources:

- all 36 channels of the local cable company;
- major television stations from the various regions of Canada, allowing members to keep track of their local news—the “superstations” of Vancouver, Edmonton, Hamilton and Halifax;
- U.S. cable programming—CNN and both C-SPAN and C-SPAN II; and
- up-to-date airline schedule information from the Ottawa International airport.

Electronic mail is the first interactive data service to be introduced on OASIS. Its primary use is to link members’ Parliamentary offices with their constituency offices. Gateway access to other information services is planned. Other data services projected for the future are internal security/alarm systems and energy management features.

Broadcasting Service provides other services in addition to gavel-to-gavel coverage and maintenance of the OASIS local area network. Members can request copies of videotapes from Broadcasting Service for their own purposes. Generally, these have not been used in political campaigns. Tapes of all proceedings dating back to 1977 are stored archivally and are available for research by members and the public. Broadcasting Service also maintains a studio which can be used by each party a specified number of hours per week, depending on the size of the party. A common use of the studio is to produce members’ electronic newsletters.

Broadcasting Service is staffed with 37 full-time and 10 part-time employees who operate both the OASIS and gavel-to-gavel services. The annual operating budget is \$1.4 million (Canadian dollars). The majority of this budget goes to salaries. The installation of OASIS from 1981 to 1985 cost approximately \$4 to \$6 million. The internal systems are funded by the House. The Canadian Broadcast Corporation funds the satellite-distributed gavel-to-gavel feed which reaches cable systems and broadcasters.

## **B. The Ontario Legislative Assembly: State-of-the-Art**

Legislative proceedings of the provincial government of Ontario have been transmitted since 1986 from Queen’s Park in Toronto via satellite to cable systems.<sup>8</sup> The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly initiated the system’s planning. It recommended a “state-of-the-art broadcast system which would produce an accurate, factual and coherent record of proceedings of the Assembly in a manner understandable to the viewing public . . . and . . . which could bring the proceedings to as wide a cross-section of the province as possible.”<sup>9</sup>



The system is designed to operate as unobtrusively as possible, according to Bill Somerville, Manager of Broadcast and Recording Services. Remote-controlled cameras cover the Assembly and selected committees.<sup>10</sup> Cameras are recessed to minimize distractions and are remotely operated from control panels in adjacent control rooms. Lighting is indirect with little glare and minimum heat output. Ten new chandeliers which match the existing ones were added to the Assembly to raise the indirect light levels to broadcast requirements while retaining the architectural integrity of the chamber.<sup>11</sup>

Five cameras have been installed in the Assembly chamber and four in a committee room which is shared by several committees. The clerk's office and committee chairpersons meet to schedule this room one week in advance. Generally, high profile committees televise their hearings from this room.

Members' seating positions in the Assembly chamber are stored in the remote-control system's computer. The system can store up to 500 such positions for each camera. When a member speaks and his or her microphone is activated, the most appropriate camera automatically focuses on that person. At the same time, an identifying caption, also stored in the system, is automatically superimposed ("supered") on the video picture. The computer system also stores such information as which camera has priority in given situations.

The system can operate in three modes. In automatic mode, the system is completely controlled by the activation of a microphone which triggers both camera and caption selection. During live broadcasts, the system is usually operated in semi-automatic mode. This mode still takes advantage of all the automatic features but leaves camera selection and timing of graphics to the control room director. The manual mode would be utilized during a computer system failure.

The camera practices of the Ontario Legislative Assembly are somewhat different from the gavel-to-gavel television coverage of the House of Commons in Ottawa. Over-the-shoulder, wide shots and zooms are allowed in Toronto, shots which are restricted in Ottawa. Members can speak without limit in Toronto but are limited to twenty minutes followed by questions and comments in Ottawa. Toronto's coverage features selected committees, aired live or tape-delayed when the Legislative Assembly is not in session.<sup>12</sup> The House of Commons, on the other hand, does not cover committee hearings, although members can monitor them on in-house audio channels.

Ontario Legislative Assembly proceedings are televised live followed by a repeat broadcast in the evenings. Committees are televised live or tape-delayed depending on the schedule of the Assembly (which has first priority). When the Assembly is in session, it televises an average of 50 to 60 hours per week of live and tape-delayed floor and committee proceedings.

The gavel-to-gavel feed of the Ontario Legislative Assembly is transmitted to the Anik C3 satellite and distributed to cable systems throughout Ontario. Approximately 82% of the population can potentially view the proceedings. A broadcast feed (with no graphics) is supplied to all members of the press gallery. Another pool broadcast feed is supplied to the main Television Operation Control (TOC) in Toronto, accessible to broadcasters throughout the country.

Because Anik C3 is a Ku-band satellite, most cable systems were initially unable to receive Ontario's legislative programming. (Virtually all cable programming is now delivered via C-band satellites.) A legislatively funded subsidy reimbursed cable operators for the cost of purchasing compatible satellite dishes. This one-time subsidy—a maximum of \$15,000—allowed cable systems to acquire downlinks and the necessary electronic equipment to access Anik C3.

The legislative television service programs a nine-channel closed circuit system distributed to members and staff in the Assembly and nearby government buildings. Programming includes:

- two channels (English and French) for the Assembly proceedings and another two for committee coverage;
- two channels with schedule information in French and English (character-generated) which also include text-based news digests of television newscasts;
- a separate video channel for press conferences;
- two request channels used by members to view tapes of previous proceedings;
- a daily video "News Digest" of political stories produced by the seven local television stations; and
- the 40 channels of the local cable company.

Broadcast and Recording Services produces informational programs for members of the Legislative Assembly. Past productions include a primer on the legislative process, an introduction to the library and an orientation for new members. It also covers ceremonial events such as the Royal visit and the opening session of Parliament.

The service is staffed by 17 full-time and seven free lance employees, the latter hired when needed. The system cost \$3.2 million for installation and building renovation. The annual operating budget is approximately \$1 million. Three-fourths of this covers salaries. As much as 48 hours of programming per week is stored archivally on tapes, which adds up to a \$100,000 per year outlay for tapes. Additionally, the annual satellite transponder and uplink charges are approximately \$1.4 million.

### **C. The Australian Parliament: Automated System of the Future**

Full television coverage of legislative proceedings has been built into the world's newest parliamentary structure. Construction of the Australian parliamentary complex in Canberra, begun in 1980, was completed on schedule in 1988. The \$1 billion, three million square foot seat of government replaced the cramped quarters of the "temporary" Parliament house, which had been home to Australia's "pollies" for 60 years. Its 4,500 rooms house 3,500 occupants, making it the largest building in Australia.

Integrated into the new structure is an extensive video system, designed to provide both Parliament and the public with a full visual record of all major

debates and events in the Parliament. While parliamentary proceedings are not yet broadcast to the public on a gavel-to-gavel basis, the video system has been designed for broadcast quality transmission. As such, the Australian Parliament is expected to be a "model for communicating the democratic process of decision-making to the electorate."<sup>13</sup>

Although the design of the Parliament's video system is innovative, parliamentary television is not new to Australia. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) televises selected proceedings of the House and Senate, such as opening ceremonies and budget debates. It has provided radio broadcasts of both chambers since 1946, making Australia one of the first countries in the world to air parliamentary proceedings. The ABC has been a full partner with the Parliament in designing the audio and video systems for the new building.

A remote-control camera system covers every member of the House and Senate in a variety of legislative proceedings. A total of 14 cameras have been placed in the main chambers of the parliamentary complex, seven cameras each in the House and Senate chambers. In addition, between two and five cameras can be placed on short notice in each of the 19 committee rooms. These rooms have been installed with camera recesses and equipment racks, but the provision of cameras has been postponed because of budget cuts. Cameras can also be installed on a temporary basis in the Reception Hall where ceremonial events occur.

Cameras are remotely operated from control desks which are linked to a local area network. The LAN also allows control desk operators to remotely operate equipment other than cameras—video recorders, character-generators and lighting systems.<sup>14</sup>

The seating positions of members are electronically stored in the system which can recall up to 250 such positions. When a member speaks, the microphone is activated and the most appropriate camera is automatically switched to that person. An identifying caption, also stored in the system's memory, is automatically added to the television picture.

Similar to the Ontario Parliamentary system, much of the Australian operation is controlled by computer. The computer stores information determining which camera has priority in given situations and which caption should be inserted when a microphone has been activated. Because the system is entirely automated, it is theoretically not necessary for an operator to be present. A control desk operator can, however, override all systems. When programming is produced for broadcast purposes, an operator performs such tasks as shot framing which require a greater degree of selectivity than is afforded by the automatic system.

The audio system can transmit in stereo and includes provisions for language translation, services for the hearing impaired and a headphone system for the press gallery. The public address and emergency warning systems are integrated into the overall design. Even the clocks and division lights (that announce when a chamber is called into session) are technically tied to the television system. An in-house monitoring system, similar to the Canadian

systems, has also been installed. Currently 45 video and 29 audio channels are operational.

The Australian system can be characterized as “high technology, low profile.” The audio and video systems are combined under a single design philosophy comprising a large-scale building-wide communications network. The technical equipment is integrated into the architecture of the building and is operated with minimum intrusion into the legislative process. Remote-controlled equipment avoids locating operators in the chambers. And low-light cameras eliminate the need for glaring and hot lighting systems.<sup>15</sup>

A typical broadcast system can spend as much as 60% of its budget on staff.<sup>16</sup> Once fully installed, the ongoing operation of the Australian Parliament system is expected to provide cost-effective coverage of legislative proceedings due to the low staffing requirements relative to the large size of the operation.

The Australian system offers a model of a fully televised legislative operation with a potentially cost-effective way to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage. Its state-of-the-art capabilities provide a fascinating combination of modern television technology and legislative coverage.

## D. Conclusions

Parliamentary television systems suggest several innovative approaches for televising state legislative proceedings:

*High-tech approach.* The Canadian and Australian parliamentary television systems take advantage of the latest in remote-control and computer-assisted video systems. Their highly automated camera operations not only require minimal staff, but also reduce intrusion into legislative proceedings by placing technicians in the control room rather than in the chambers. The use of cameras with minimum lighting requirements allows members to carry out their work in the comfort of relatively cool and low-glare lights.

*Video monitoring systems.* While the first priority of parliamentary television systems has been to open the proceedings to the public, the parliaments discussed in this chapter have also taken advantage of the video operations to install multichannel closed-circuit monitoring systems for their own use. They have, in effect, developed full-fledged information systems composed of a variety of video, audio and data channels accessible to them via monitors in their offices. Members and staff have found that these systems streamline their work, extend their ability to be informed about a wide range of parliamentary proceedings and allow them to keep up with events in their home provinces as well as the national and international scenes.

*Customized video services.* Parliamentary television systems also make several individualized and time-saving video services available to members. A member can request that a recent segment of floor proceedings or perhaps a news clip that he or she missed be transmitted to a specially designated “on-demand” channel at a time convenient to that member. Studios are also available for producing members’ electronic newsletters—videotapes which deliver status reports to constituents via local television stations and cable systems.



*Historic record.* Parliamentary systems take a “camera of record” approach to taping and preserving floor proceedings, thereby creating an electronic *Hansard* as an historic record (similar to the *Congressional Record* of the U.S. Congress). The archival library of past taped proceedings is available to members, staff and the general public alike for research purposes.

*Multi-purpose system designs.* The parliamentary systems described in this chapter represent ambitious and sophisticated video installations. Flexible systems designs allow television signals to serve multiple purposes, providing a variety of video services to viewers and members alike. Government proceedings have been opened to the public, communications with constituents have improved and members and their staffs have been able to benefit from a number of derivative video services.

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## NOTES

1. Heller, Michele. “Government on Television: The Whole World Is Watching.” *C-SPAN Update* 7, no. 24 (June 26, 1989): 1.
2. Information on Canadian Parliament systems was obtained from interviews with Ivan Barclay, Chief of Broadcasting Service, House of Commons, fall 1987.
3. Remote-control camera systems of Evershed Power Optics, an English manufacturer now known as Radamec, are used in the Canadian House of Commons.
4. Satellite transmission of the Canadian House of Commons was begun in 1979, two years after gavel-to-gavel coverage began. During the first two years, tapes were mailed daily to each cable company.
5. Heller, p. 8.
6. From a three-part paper:  
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7. *Local Area Networks and OASIS*. [Ottawa, Ontario: Canada House of Commons OASIS Project, n.d.].
8. Information on the Ontario Parliament’s video system was provided by Bill Somerville, Manager, Broadcast and Recording Service, Ontario Legislative Assembly, fall 1987.
9. Mitchinson, Tom. “Will the Government Get Good Ratings? The New Parliamentary Channel Gears Up at Ontario Legislature.” *Broadcaster* (September 1986): 16.
10. The Ontario Legislative Assembly uses remote-control camera systems from both Radamec (formerly Evershed Power Optics) of England and TSM of New York.
11. Mitchinson, p.20.
12. Warren, John. “Queen’s Park or House of Commons?” *The Ottawa Citizen* (October 27, 1986).



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Alec Cohen, Project Director, Engineering Services and Consultancy, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Feb. 1988 and April 1989;  
Fisher, John. "In the Public Interest—Televising Parliamentary Proceedings." *Television: Journal of the Royal Television Society* (August 1986);  
Scott, David Clark. "Canberra's Down Under 'Pollies' Palace." *Christian Science Monitor* (November 3, 1988): 17–18;  
and the pamphlet, "The ABC and the New Parliament House," dated Feb. 1986.
14. The Australian Parliament's remote-control camera system is designed by Vinten Ltd. of England. Additional information on technical capabilities can be found in:  
Saltarelli, R. S. R. "The One Man Studio." Paper presented at 129th Technical Conference of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, Los Angeles, CA, October-November 1987 (Preprint No. 129-139).
15. Information provided by Alec Cohen, Project Director, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and the pamphlet, "The ABC and the New Parliament House."
16. Saltarelli, p. 2.



## **PART III**

# **Implementation of a Public Affairs Television Channel for California**



## **Chapter 6**

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# **Programming Opportunities**

California offers a rich array of programming opportunities for a statewide public affairs television channel. A fully equipped Sacramento studio and production facility would enable a California Channel to distribute live and taped coverage of legislative and executive branch proceedings. It could televise press conferences, meetings of public policy organizations and other events with its own crews. With permission from the California Supreme Court, a California Channel could cover oral arguments on significant state issues.

In addition, a California Channel could originate its own news programs, roundtable discussions, interviews, viewer call-in shows and election coverage from its Sacramento studio. With access to video feeds from municipalities around the state, it could present selected city council and county board of supervisors meetings on topics of statewide interest.

Legislative proceedings could be covered by video cameras installed in the Capitol and operated by legislative staff. The resulting video feeds could then be distributed throughout the Capitol for viewing in legislative offices. A special link could be added to connect press offices near the Capitol and allow reporters to watch hearings and debates without leaving their offices. The video coverage



would also be made available to the California Channel, an independent nonprofit corporation, for statewide distribution via satellite, cable television systems and broadcast stations.

A California Channel would thus serve a dual distribution function. First, it would distribute the programming already generated by others, including video coverage of the state Legislature, selected meetings of executive branch agencies, the state Supreme Court, county boards of supervisors and city councils. Second, it would produce its own programming, including news summaries, roundtable discussions, viewer call-ins, election coverage, press conferences and statewide public affairs-related meetings and speeches.

Drawing on precedents set by C-SPAN and other states, this chapter describes the range, quality and quantity of programming available to a new public affairs television channel. It describes the programming preferences of Californians, based on focus group findings and a statewide public opinion poll conducted for the California Channel project. The chapter also discusses the editorial and other "control" problems facing such a network. Although actual programming decisions must await the construction and staffing of the California Channel, many program issues can be discussed in advance such as program sources currently available, live versus taped delivery, the number of hours the network should be on the air, edited versus uncut programming and program formats preferred by California audiences.

To maximize its effectiveness, the California Channel should offer its programs to cable systems and other distribution outlets on a modular basis. Programming could start with regularly scheduled two- to four-hour segments of news, excerpts from committee hearings, floor proceedings and press conferences as well as news and analysis programs. These would be transmitted every evening at the same time. In addition, the California Channel could transmit live uncut coverage of committee hearings, legislative debates, press conferences and other events during the day on a flexible schedule as these events occur. By starting with a carefully limited number of programming hours, the California Channel can keep initial production standards high. Programming can later expand to eight, twelve and 24 hours a day as viewer demand and available funding permit. (A sample programming day appears in Table 6.1 below; sample programming weeks are provided in Table 6.2 and Appendix E.)

## **A. Coverage of Government Proceedings**

Hundreds of government proceedings occur in California virtually every week. In Sacramento, legislative floor debates, committee hearings, press conferences, conventions and speeches by public officials dot the political landscape. In cities and counties around the state, local governments also hold meetings, debate issues and vote on hotly contested matters. California Channel coverage of these proceedings, both inside and outside of Sacramento, could allow viewers to watch the transactions of government directly, without editors or commentators interposing their judgments between speaker and audience. Direct coverage of governmental hearings would also create a permanent "public record" on video, an electronic equivalent of the *Congressional Record* for Congress or

*Hansard* for the British Parliament. It could preserve lawmakers' judgments and decisions for posterity.

Coverage of government proceedings can be transmitted live or on a tape-delay basis. Although live programming's immediacy enhances viewer interest, scheduling and timing problems will require some programming to be taped and shown at later times. Taping also allows programming to be used in other programming formats, such as news summaries and documentaries.

### ***1. Legislative Floor Sessions***

The California Legislature routinely conducts transactions which affect the lives of millions of its citizens. Consequently legislative floor sessions offer much of potential interest to viewers. Debates over controversial bills, particularly at the end of the legislative sessions, are often dramatic. Special speeches, such as the governor's "State of the State" message or the remarks of invited visitors, frequently raise important issues. Procedural debates to bypass a committee or table a bill can be educational. Even resolutions honoring individuals or organizations, such as the American astronauts, illuminate historical events.

Coverage of the Legislature's floor sessions would offer viewers important benefits. Remote-control cameras could be operated unobtrusively in both chambers and the main committee rooms. Video coverage could be compiled in the nearby California Channel facility and then distributed around the state. Viewers inside and outside the Capitol could observe arguments for and against bills on their path toward enactment or rejection. Audiences could assess the views and personalities of their state legislators. Schools and universities could incorporate legislative debates into their curricula. Television and print reporters could use video feeds of floor debates to upgrade their Sacramento coverage.

Although Californians today have virtually no access to live or taped television coverage of legislative proceedings, strong precedents have been set by both the U.S. Congress and other states. The Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) currently provides the best known example of full gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage. Started in 1979, C-SPAN covers the proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives. Since 1986, C-SPAN II has covered the Senate. C-SPAN is available to 43 million homes through 3,200 cable systems.<sup>1</sup> (See Chapter 3, "C-SPAN.") The precedent for gavel-to-gavel coverage of state legislatures has been set by at least six states. Viewers in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Nebraska, Minnesota, Oregon and New York can watch unedited coverage of their state legislatures on either cable television or public broadcast systems. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.")

Before successful coverage of California legislative floor sessions can be initiated, several potential problems must be overcome. These include programming appeal, scheduling difficulties, live versus taped coverage and editing choices, discussed in the following sections.

#### ***a. Programming Appeal***

Portions of Assembly and Senate floor proceedings can be intensely interesting, particularly during the closing weeks of the session in August and

September when legislators vote on bills. At most other times, however, floor proceedings are of scant interest to anyone other than clerical staff. Between January and March, little of import occurs to disturb the routine introduction of bills except for one week every two years when votes are cast on bills left over from last year's session. Although the official legislative minutes may show the Assembly open for business during this time, in reality only formulaic and routine procedures are carried out, mostly by staff, while the majority of members attend to other business. This period is filled with first readings of bills, a long and uninformative process in which sheaves of bills are routinely introduced by simply announcing their authors and numbers. Committee reports delivered to the floor are often handled in a similarly mechanized fashion—for example, by short announcements that “bill number such-and-such has been reported out by committee so-and-so.”

Only much later in the session, upon a bill's third reading, do legislators actually debate and vote on the floor. Many debates are short and perfunctory, especially on non-controversial bills or those lacking significant support. Voting on controversial bills, those which attract fierce partisan conflict or lengthy argument, can be interrupted with lengthy roll calls.

These legislative floor proceedings—routine bill readings, committee reports and voting roll calls—are hardly the stuff of exciting political debate. Were they transmitted around the state, most viewers would be quickly put to sleep.

The proceedings of the Assembly and Senate also differ in their potential interest for viewers. The Assembly has 80 members compared with the Senate's 40. Because the Assembly has more members and less feeling for decorum, its atmosphere is more volatile. Assembly members often harangue each other, and the Assembly votes more quickly than the Senate.

The Senate, on the other hand, is a smaller body. It may spend an average of only one to two hours each Monday and Thursday on legislation. Senate debates are generally less heated and its proceedings slower-paced than the Assembly. It conducts a roll call vote on every issue, taking considerably longer than the Assembly to record its members' votes. Although the Senate periodically conducts significant debates, Assembly proceedings may offer more on a day-to-day basis to hold viewers' interest.

The Assembly and Senate also frequently conduct their floor sessions at the same times of day. To transmit live coverage of *both* floor sessions would require two television or cable channels, a costly alternative and one no doubt foreclosed by California cable systems' limited channel capacity. (See Chapter 7, “Cable Distribution.”) Although the Assembly and the Senate rarely schedule their *own* floor sessions and committee hearings at the same time, they do hold floor sessions when the other body is conducting committee hearings. To cover a routine Assembly floor session and avoid live coverage of an important Senate committee hearing, for example, would not make good programming sense.

Other states have developed various responses to such programming problems. Some provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of only one house. Minnesota covers its Senate and Massachusetts its Assembly. New York focuses on committee hearings over floor sessions. Most states provide only news summaries

of the day's or week's events, highlighted with short segments from floor debates or committee hearings. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.") Comparable solutions may be necessary in California.

### ***b. Scheduling Difficulties***

Although California has a full-time Legislature, there are a number of reasons why it will be difficult to schedule regular coverage of legislative floor sessions. First, floor sessions are not conducted throughout the year. The Legislature begins its sessions in January, takes a week's Easter recess in the spring, breaks for a month in July, comes back in August, adjourns in September (on the first of the month if an election year, on the fifteenth if an off-election year), returns in December and then leaves for the Christmas holiday recess. Legislative floor sessions are thus not conducted for as much as five months a year.

Second, when the Legislature is in session, it typically conducts floor sessions only two days a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are devoted to committee hearings and Fridays are used for travel back to legislators' home districts. However, during the last week before the July recess and the final two weeks of the legislative session in August and September (when bills are debated), the Legislature's floor sessions may run Monday through Friday and even include weekends. Evening "crunch" sessions that last until 2 a.m. during the last week of the session are not uncommon.

Third, the start, duration and intensity of the Legislature's floor sessions are unpredictable. On some days, essential business is transacted for only a few hours—in the Assembly, for example, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Mondays and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays. When the Legislature does address essential business, its pace can vary widely. Although proceedings are slow toward the beginning of the year, June is invariably hectic as legislators scramble to finish legislative business before their long recess in July. In August, momentum picks up again and culminates in a final two week frenzy at the end of August and beginning of September as legislators seek to meet various deadlines and close the year. During both June and the end of the session (late August-early September), legislators can often be in session all hours of the night.

As a result of these factors, it would not be possible for a California Channel to cover live floor debates at regularly scheduled times of day throughout the year. The Assembly and Senate are not in session for many hours of the day and many days of the year. When both houses are in session, they begin and end their proceedings at different and occasionally overlapping times. The duration of floor sessions varies widely, from a few minutes a day to an occasional end-of-session 24-hour day. The interest level of these sessions ranges from fascinating to stultifying.

These factors would be of less concern if a full-time broadcast station or cable television channel were available to transmit legislative programming. The channel could simply transmit floor debates whenever they occurred and then fill the remaining time with other material. As detailed in Chapter 7, however, many California cable systems may lack the channel capacity to carry the California



Channel 24 hours a day. Program transmission may therefore have to be sandwiched into cable channels already dedicated to other uses—such as municipal access channels, educational access channels or partially-used commercial channels. To the extent that these other channels are able to carry a California Channel feed, it is essential that programming be offered at a specific time every day. The vagaries of legislative timing may make *regular live* coverage of legislative floor debates impossible.

### ***c. Live Versus Taped Coverage***

A third programming issue involves the question of live versus taped coverage of legislative floor debates. Proceedings of the Assembly and Senate frequently occur at the same time of day. It is thus not possible to transmit coverage of both simultaneously.

C-SPAN has addressed this difficulty by offering two full-time channels of programming, C-SPAN for the House of Representatives and C-SPAN II for the Senate. Audience figures for C-SPAN II, however, are significantly lower than for C-SPAN, since many cable systems resist devoting two full channels to Congressional coverage. In light of this experience, together with the cost and channel capacity problems raised by dual live coverage, one of California's two legislative bodies must occasionally be carried on a tape-delay basis.

This conclusion raises both programming and political issues. The "liveness" of gavel-to-gavel programming is its principal attraction. Viewers, including print and broadcast reporters, know they are watching events as they unfold in real time. Tape-delayed coverage of one house might decrease an audience's interest. One solution could be to transmit the proceedings of the second house immediately after the first. If both are covered during the same day, programming appeal might be maintained.

Tape-delayed coverage of one house also poses political dilemmas. Who is to decide which house appears live and which on tape-delay? If this programming decision is made on an assessment of relevance or importance, legislators in one house may feel slighted. Yet an arbitrary decision to transmit live proceedings of the Assembly and Senate on alternative weeks might sacrifice relevance to expediency. An important proceeding in one house might be delayed while a perfunctory clerical proceeding in the other receives live coverage.

### ***d. Editing***

Gavel-to-gavel coverage of floor sessions creates a complete and accurate record of the Legislature's daily accomplishments. Unedited coverage of floor debates also has the significant advantage of avoiding political conflicts with the Legislature over the fairness of the editing process. On the other hand, significant portions of floor sessions are likely to be irrelevant or boring to most viewers. Unedited transmissions could also substantially drive up California Channel costs, since satellite transponder time can cost from \$350 to \$1,000 an hour. Many cable systems currently lack the channel capacity to carry unedited floor debates from both the Assembly and Senate. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of both floor debates might squeeze out more interesting programming such as committee hearings on important statewide issues.

C-SPAN has steadfastly refused to edit any portion of the House or Senate proceedings. It transmits all floor sessions on a gavel-to-gavel basis with no editing or selection. This approach has significant political advantages. In exchange for access to Congressional floor sessions, C-SPAN can assure Congress that it will never favor one speaker or political party over another. Yet C-SPAN and C-SPAN II have the luxury of offering gavel-to-gavel coverage because many cable systems carry them on two full-time dedicated channels.

California cable systems, however, may be reluctant to provide the California Channel with a full-time channel, much less two. Some editing of floor sessions, either by delaying certain transmissions or condensing others, seems inevitable if a California Channel is to operate efficiently.

## ***2. Committee Hearings***

Legislative committee hearings spark much political excitement in Sacramento. Committee hearings provide a public forum in which legislators debate and shape potential laws. Proponents of bills, expert witnesses, advocates for various views and other legislators all present their opinions in open session. Committee members are free to criticize or ask questions. Witnesses are encouraged to respond. Debates are frequently wide open and robust.

### ***a. Programming Opportunities and Challenges***

Because committee hearings are typically organized around categories of issues, committees often hear testimony on a range of related bills in one day. The Committee on Elections and Reapportionment, for example, might schedule a hearing on a dozen bills which all affect the electoral process. California Channel coverage would enable viewers to watch experts debate the merits of earlier presidential primaries in California, uniform poll closing times, reapportionment of the state after 1990, campaign finance reforms and legislative ethics packages.

The Senate Judiciary Committee might consider bills stiffening penalties for drug dealers, increasing dues for attorneys or reducing awards in medical malpractice suits. The Assembly Finance and Insurance Committee might debate bills allowing out-of-state banks to do business in California, regulating the rates of insurance companies and establishing maximum credit card interest rates. The Governmental Organization Committee might consider bills on conflicts of interest for public officials, horse racing schedules and monopoly practices of beer wholesalers. Toward the end of the legislative session, the Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees might hear 100 to 200 bills a day, bills that have progressed through several other committees. These committee hearings can start at 8 a.m. in the morning and end at 10 p.m. in the evening.

Committee hearings thus offer a plethora of fascinating opportunities for public affairs coverage. Unlike gavel-to-gavel floor sessions, committee hearings are more substantive and less procedural. They address current topics of statewide concern—crime, traffic, pollution, insurance, product safety, electoral reform, taxation—in terms that can usually be grasped by the average interested citizen.



Also, unlike floor debates, the programming opportunities offered by committee hearings are more abundant. Committee hearings are scheduled throughout the year, even when the Legislature is in recess. Because the Legislature has over 30 standing committees and a number of additional ad hoc committees, multiple hearings frequently run concurrently at any one time. Committee hearings are usually scheduled for Tuesdays and Wednesday in Sacramento, but they occasionally occur on other days—particularly toward the end of the legislative session. When the Legislature is in recess, interim hearings are scheduled in other cities around the state.

### ***b. Scheduling Difficulties***

Although committee hearings could easily become a highlight of the California Channel's legislative programming, their coverage also poses technical, financial and political problems. Coverage of committee hearings would ideally require the installation of video equipment in every committee hearing room. This, in turn, would require extensive switching and monitoring facilities, additional master control room capacity and extra staff, all of which would increase the Legislature's and California Channel's costs. (See Chapter 9, "Technical and Budget.") One alternative would be to move portable video equipment from room to room. But portable equipment would require additional operators and perhaps more frequent servicing than fixed cameras.

Because many committee hearings run simultaneously, only one could be covered live. Others would have to be transmitted on a tape-delayed basis. This would require judgments as to which hearings would be of sufficient public interest to warrant live transmission. Editorial decisions would be required to determine which hearings would be covered and which omitted.

One solution to the scheduling problem would be an approach similar to that used in Ontario's Legislative Assembly. There, the committee chairs and the clerk's office decide one week in advance which hearings will be scheduled in the committee room where remote-control cameras are installed. (See Chapter 5, "Parliaments.") In California, if only the major committee hearing rooms (rooms 4202 and 4203) have cameras installed, then the committee chairs in the Assembly and Senate could jointly decide which Committee hearings would be designated for those rooms. Each house's leadership would thus decide which hearings would be seen on the California Channel.

### ***3. Press Conferences***

Press conferences are a daily occurrence in Sacramento. Many originate from the governor's press conference room, located in the basement of the Capitol. This facility is also available to legislators, other government officials and outside organizations. The press conference room is equipped with lighting for television coverage as well as audio and video jacks that send radio and television feeds to media vans through an outlet on the Capitol lawn.

Remote-control video cameras could be installed in the press conference room, with links to the control room elsewhere in the Capitol and to the California Channel studios. Legislators and their staff could view the proceedings from their offices, and the California Channel could transmit the coverage statewide.

Broadcast stations and newspapers around the state could use California Channel feeds to supplement their own news coverage. Press conferences could thus provide an additional source of California Channel programming.

#### ***4. Speeches, Conferences and Conventions***

Sacramento hosts dozens of conferences, conventions and speeches every year. Statewide organizations find it convenient to meet in Sacramento because they have access to elected representatives involved in their issues. Legislators are frequently the featured speakers at conference events, and legislative staff brief participants on current issues.<sup>2</sup> In addition, California State University-Sacramento hosts numerous conferences and well-known speakers throughout the year.

C-SPAN has provided stimulating conference coverage for many years—meetings of public policy groups, think tanks, educational institutions and journalist organizations. In fact, C-SPAN's coverage of events sponsored by non-governmental groups generates nearly 90% of its own first-run programming.<sup>3</sup> NY-SCAN in New York cablecasts capital-area conferences as well. A California Channel could perform the same service for a state public affairs network.

#### ***5. Selected City Council Proceedings***

Although the bulk of California Channel programming would originate from Sacramento, interesting possibilities exist for inclusion of programming produced by city and county governments. Over 120 California municipalities now cablecast local government meetings. Many more will begin televising their proceedings in the near future.<sup>4</sup> Typically, the meetings of city councils and county boards of supervisors are carried live or tape-delayed over cable television municipal access channels. Cable systems generally provide municipal access channels for city use as part of their local franchise agreement.<sup>5</sup>

Once a California Channel network is in place, it could acquire videotape recordings of selected city council meetings and distribute them via its statewide network. If satellite uplink facilities were available at the local level, these meetings could be transmitted live.

Not all meetings, of course, would be used—only those addressing issues of statewide concern. A Beverly Hills debate on an ordinance banning smoking in all restaurants, a San Diego debate on the prohibition of assault rifles within city limits, a San Francisco slow-growth measure—all might be of interest to other communities in the state. Gradual incorporation of local discussions into a statewide public affairs network would enable California citizens to learn how other residents of their state grapple with shared problems.

#### ***6. Supreme Court Oral Arguments***

Some of the most fascinating proceedings in state government are typically conducted out of public view—the oral arguments before the California Supreme Court. These proceedings might also provide interesting programming for the California Channel. California and at least 44 other states allow still and television cameras in their courtrooms.<sup>6</sup> Yet in California, each time a television station wishes to cover a Supreme Court proceeding it must file a separate

application with the court. Even then, only one camera can be used and its feed "pooled" with other television stations.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, NY-SCAN, an arm of the New York Commission on Cable Television, provides regular coverage of the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court. It transmits all oral arguments on a gavel-to-gavel basis to area cable systems. Once a California Channel is in operation, the California Supreme Court might be willing to open up its proceedings to similar live or videotaped gavel-to-gavel television coverage.

Historically, courts have resisted television coverage of their proceedings. Their resistance, however, has focused primarily on trial court proceedings. Critics have worried that witnesses would be intimidated, defendants would lose their privacy, advocates would play to the cameras, jurors would be distracted and verdicts would be affected. Yet televised experiments in most states have disproved these fears. Once trials are underway, cameras are largely forgotten—in the words of one judge, becoming "part of the furniture."<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, many of these apprehensions seem inapplicable on the appellate level. There are no witnesses, no defendants, no jurors and no jury verdicts in proceedings before the California Supreme Court. Instead, the court discusses questions of law and policy in an atmosphere of intellectual debate. The presence of television cameras would not influence the debate yet would allow interested viewers around the state a chance to watch current legal issues unfold. Gavel-to-gavel coverage would avoid the problem of television stations using short and perhaps misleading excerpts to illustrate a legal controversy. If California follows New York's successful experiment, coverage by the California Channel will allow viewers to observe some of the most significant government proceedings available in the state.

Coverage of California Supreme Court proceedings would, however, present logistic difficulties. The Supreme Court meets in three different locations throughout the year. During January, April, June and October, it convenes in Los Angeles, usually for about one week out of each month. In March and November, it meets in Sacramento, usually for about three days during each month. And in February, May, September and December, it meets in San Francisco, usually for about a week out of each month.

Coverage of Supreme Court arguments would either require the installation of cameras in all three locations or the use of mobile video equipment. If carried live, the feed would need to be transmitted to the California Channel's facility in Sacramento, probably by satellite. Supreme Court proceedings might also be covered on a tape-delay basis, with videotapes shipped to the California Channel in Sacramento. Although coverage of the California Supreme Court would add an important component to the California Channel's programming, it would require additional court clearances and a supplement to the Channel's operating budget.

### ***7. Executive Branch Proceedings***

Although less visible, many executive branch agencies conduct hearings of vital importance to the state. The Coastal Commission often holds fiery hearings on proposed construction projects slated for areas near beaches and recreational areas. The Fair Political Practices Commission issues regulations which affect

how much money elected officials can receive from major contributors. The Board of Equalization assesses taxes on the state's corporations. The Board of Regents hires university presidents, allocates funding to construct additional campuses and has debated the withdrawal of investments from South Africa. The Board of Education decides which textbooks should be used in public schools. The Public Utilities Commission regulates the rates of local telephone service. The California Transportation Commission determines transportation policy throughout the state. And the Air Resources Board and Water Resources Control Board regulate the state's environmental quality.

Camera crews from the California Channel could videotape selected meetings of executive branch agencies in Sacramento and include them in the daily program schedule. Contract crews could be hired to cover meetings in other cities such as the Public Utilities Commission in San Francisco. By televising executive branch coverage, the California Channel could substantially expand its public service programming and bring to light government proceedings which have seen little public exposure.

## **B. Potential News and Analysis Programming**

The previous discussion focused on *direct* coverage of government proceedings. An additional source of California Channel programming involves *secondary* reports and observations on those government proceedings. Such secondary programming could include regularly scheduled newscasts, press corps analyses, roundtable discussions, viewer call-in programs, documentaries and special election coverage. It would provide viewers with a context in which to evaluate and reach more informed judgments about the actions of public officials.

Unlike gavel-to-gavel coverage of floor debates or committee hearings, programming involving news, commentary or analysis does not directly present the viewer with the unedited proceedings of government. Such programming would need to be produced by the California Channel itself, a process requiring time, talent and money. Nonetheless, California focus groups and a public opinion poll show that viewers value condensed programming that directly highlights the pros and cons of current issues and gives them additional perspectives on governmental proceedings.

### **1. News**

A daily or weekly legislative news program is the most prevalent form of public affairs programming produced in other states. Once video coverage of floor debates and committee hearings is available, the compilation of a regular newscast becomes practical. Newscasts can be illustrated with clips of legislative floor debates, excerpts from press conferences and testimony of expert witnesses at committee hearings.

California Channel studio and editing facilities near the Capitol would make a nightly legislative newscast feasible. Videotape recorders could preserve the proceedings of the day for late afternoon editing. Portable video equipment could supply coverage of events outside the Capitol. As the scope of the California



Channel's programming expands, electronic news-gathering equipment could be used to obtain news coverage from other locations around the state.

A nightly or weekly *legislative* newscast could ultimately evolve into a nightly statewide *public affairs* newscast, providing news of other important political events. Such a newscast could include news from the executive and judicial branches of government as well as items from city and county governments and conventions or conferences on current public policy issues. The California Channel could expand beyond coverage of the Legislature in Sacramento and become a full-fledged California public affairs network.

## ***2. Interviews and Roundtable Discussions***

Other common formats for public affairs television programming are interviews and roundtable discussions which are sometimes combined to lend variety to the program hour. Both C-SPAN and a number of states present programs in which a moderator interviews legislators, other elected officials and representatives of government agencies. Interviews also include outside experts on current topics, political consultants, scientists, attorneys, university professors and community activists. These programs generally attract a loyal following because they allow viewers to explore issues in depth.

A programming format common to both commercial broadcast and public television is the roundtable discussion. "Washington Week in Review" on PBS and "This Week With David Brinkley" on ABC are two well-known examples. Typically the moderator highlights issues of current importance and guests express their views. This format is flexible and quickly responsive to current issues. It exposes the public to vigorous debates and the views of political "insiders."

The California Channel could produce such programs at least once a week from its Sacramento facility. This program format would also enable members of the capital press corps to offer their analyses of current issues. Because much of the state's political expertise is concentrated in these experienced reporters, press corps roundtables would provide a valuable source of informed commentary.

## ***3. Viewer Call-In Programs***

Viewer call-in programs are appealing because they allow citizens to present their questions directly to elected officials. Viewers can raise questions that even experienced political analysts may miss. Call-in programs also give elected officials instant feedback from the public on current issues. They allow viewers to watch officials respond to questioning, thereby creating a significant measure of political accountability.

C-SPAN in Washington, D.C., has developed considerable expertise with viewer call-in programming formats. Typically, a senator, member of Congress or executive branch official is invited on the program and questioned by the host. After various issues have been explored in depth, phone lines are opened and viewers ask the guest questions. A telephone number is periodically flashed on the screen to encourage calls.

Viewer call-in programs could be a regular feature of the California Channel. Transmissions would be live, and the program could utilize a toll-free



"800" number. California residents would be able to call the program and question elected officials directly. If C-SPAN's experience is any indication, call-in programs are likely to be a popular feature on the California Channel. In 1988, Californians comprised one-fifth of all C-SPAN callers, a percentage far exceeding the state's proportion of the nation's population.<sup>9</sup>

With the use of computers and sophisticated telephone messaging systems, the California Channel can take advantage of other forms of interactivity to link viewers with government leaders. In the Bay Area, for example, local organizations have experimented with "electronic town meetings." Using this approach, a documentary or discussion is aired on a controversial issue. At its conclusion, a pre-selected random sample of citizen "voters" answers a list of questions presented by the moderator. They vote from their homes by dialing an 800 telephone number and keying in the number that corresponds to their responses. A computer immediately tabulates the votes and prints the results on the television screen. (Alternatively, the computer can be opened to any viewer, although this approach would generate a more "skewed" sample of callers.) Innovative techniques such as these would enable the California Channel to move from a one-way transmission of information, or monologue, to a two-way flow, or dialogue.<sup>10</sup>

#### ***4. Special Election Coverage***

The California Channel would have the potential to provide a major service during primary and general state elections, which fall in June and November of even-numbered years. During these campaign periods 80 Assembly and 20 Senate seats are up for election. Over 300 candidates vie for legislative positions during a single primary-general election period. Important statewide offices—Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Controller, Treasurer, Superintendent of Public Instruction and four Board of Equalization seats—also generate vigorous competition. Statewide initiatives on highly controversial topics—lotteries, cigarette taxes, AIDS, water policy, toxic wastes, insurance reform, campaign finance limitations—are increasingly reaching the ballot.

Because California is such a large state, the commercial broadcast media are too expensive for political advertising by most legislative candidates and some ballot measure campaigns. An Assembly candidate from Santa Monica, for example, is generally unable to purchase radio or television time to promote his or her candidacy on Los Angeles area broadcast stations because the costs are prohibitive. Such purchases are also extraordinarily inefficient since a large percentage of the audience reached by the broadcast signal lives outside the legislative district's borders.

As a result, many legislative candidates and some under-financed statewide candidates and ballot measures fail to receive substantial media coverage during campaigns. California Channel coverage of these campaigns could remedy these deficiencies. California Channel staff could interview candidates in statewide races and highly competitive legislative contests, cover debates on key races, supplement nightly newscasts with political coverage and generally expose candidates to the electorate. This programming service could ultimately prove enormously beneficial to California voters.

## C. What Californians Say About Public Affairs Programming

The California Channel project conducted two studies to obtain Californians' opinions about programming. It held a series of small informal focus groups to discuss participants' programming preferences. And it sponsored a statewide public opinion telephone poll to ascertain the preferences of a large group of randomly selected individuals.

### 1. Focus Groups

Between August and October 1987, the California Channel project conducted eight focus groups in four California cities—Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. Participants discussed their attitudes toward current news sources and their preferences for programs on a possible statewide public affairs channel. (See Appendix C which describes the focus group results more fully.)

In general, focus group participants concluded that their existing sources of news and information on state public affairs were inadequate and biased; that a California Channel could increase citizens' access to their elected representatives; and that programming on a new channel should present information clearly and objectively, allowing viewers to form their own conclusions.

#### a. Programming Formats

Focus group participants expressed their opinions on various programming formats after watching a 16-minute videotape with excerpts from other states' television coverage of legislative proceedings.<sup>11</sup> Overall, participants ranked their preferences as follows: issue coverage, news summaries, educational specials, viewer call-in shows, gavel-to-gavel coverage, roundtable discussions and press conferences.

*Issue coverage.* Participants expressed the strongest preference for programs that focused on specific issues of importance to California. They felt that coverage of all viewpoints in an objective and nonbiased manner would allow viewers to understand and form their own opinions on complicated subjects. The lottery, the homeless, recycling laws and water problems were mentioned as examples for in-depth coverage. Critics of this format worried that an emphasis on objectivity might not leave viewers with an understanding of possible solutions. They suggested that issue-oriented programs be combined with viewer call-in programs or roundtable discussions for greater effectiveness.

*News formats.* Participants valued news programming highly. They felt that watching regularly scheduled news programs was an efficient way to keep up to date on a wide range of issues. Several recommended a 30-minute daily or a 60-minute weekly newscast covering important state issues. Critics of this proposal felt that news summaries glossed over important issues. They wanted more in-depth programming that delved further into specific issues. Most participants emphasized the need for skilled and impartial news commentators. Some suggested that news programs be combined with roundtable discussions, similar to "Washington Week in Review" and the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" on PBS.

*Educational specials.* Focus group participants also expressed a desire to see educational specials, programs that would explain the legislative process in

Sacramento. Several felt they needed to know more about government itself before they could fully grasp specific issues being handled in Sacramento. Some thought this programming would be particularly useful before elections.

*Viewer call-in programs.* The opportunity to interact directly with legislators via call-in programs was attractive to some focus group participants. They stressed the importance of a good moderator and suggested that this program format be combined with other formats such as roundtable discussions, news summaries or issue coverage. In general, this format seemed more appealing to participants who felt themselves to be politically less well informed. More sophisticated participants felt call-in shows were often sidetracked by “off the wall” comments and questions.

*Gavel-to-gavel coverage.* Gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative sessions was controversial among participants. Many valued uncut and uncensored coverage of legislative debates because it portrays actual governmental transactions in a nonbiased manner. Others thought they would not have time to watch or that large portions might be uninteresting. Some participants familiar with C-SPAN expressed frustration at not knowing what was being discussed when they tuned in. They suggested adding text graphics to the screen to indicate the topic of debate so that someone tuning in would instantly know whether the subject interested them. Some thought gavel-to-gavel coverage would be more useful if they could learn in advance from a program schedule when a particular issue would be debated. Others suggested that gavel-to-gavel coverage of committee hearings would be preferable to floor sessions because committee hearings often encapsulate important debates in a concentrated fashion.

*Roundtable discussions.* Although the roundtable discussion format was not ranked highly by focus group participants (perhaps because of the poor production quality of the segment they viewed), several suggested that roundtable discussion programs be combined with other programming formats. They cited the “MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour” as an example of a combined news-interview-roundtable format which summarizes the news during the first 10 minutes and then discusses one or two issues with a panel of experts for the remainder of the program.

*Press conferences.* Press conferences were least favored, albeit least discussed, by focus group participants. Some felt press conferences simply reflected the speaker’s own agenda, that they contained little of interest and that reporters asked repetitious questions. Others suggested that press conferences be summarized in newscasts and not carried in their entirety. By contrast, one participant believed strongly that press conferences allowed citizens to watch democracy in action. He urged that press conferences receive more coverage, not less.

### ***b. Other Programming Suggestions***

Focus group participants offered several suggestions for designing the overall programming structure of a statewide public affairs channel. They generally stressed that programming should be convenient and accessible. Portions of it, at least, should be transmitted during evening hours.

Programming should be relevant to the widest possible audience and not just of interest to higher income groups or political sophisticates. On-screen character-generated messages should be utilized to inform viewers what topics are being discussed and to provide telephone numbers and addresses to contact lawmakers or request further information.

Participants also stressed the importance of local and regional issue coverage. They worried that matters of interest to rural areas would be eclipsed by coverage aimed at more populous cities and counties. Many asked for coverage that was balanced between statewide, regional and local issues. They emphasized the need for program guides that would alert them to local issue coverage in advance so they could tune in and watch.

The educational importance of the new public affairs channel was also stressed. Many felt it should be available in classrooms and incorporated into the curriculum. Some doubted younger viewers would be attracted to California Channel programming, yet many stressed the importance of explaining the political process to children and young adults.

Strong production values were important to most focus group participants. They did not want "slick" productions but were also unwilling to watch "amateurish" programs. Complementary text and graphics visuals were deemed desirable whenever possible.

The program preferences of focus group participants suggest an overall mix of news, discussion and live coverage, to include:

- a regular issue coverage program similar to "60 Minutes;"
- a "Nightline" roundtable format with a skilled moderator, articulate spokespersons and highly placed officials, combined with viewer call-ins;
- a weekly 60-minute or daily 30-minute news program;
- hourly news updates, like cable's CNN;
- occasional educational specials; and
- selected gavel-to-gavel coverage of important issues.

Participants also suggested innovative programming ideas such as supplementing the channel's programming with alpha-numeric teletext signals; adding explanatory messages or the names and addresses of legislators on the television screen; offering electronic public opinion polling; and setting up teleconferencing to enable participants to testify at legislative hearings without leaving their home cities.

## ***2. Public Opinion Poll Preferences***

During November and December 1987, the San Francisco State University Public Research Institute conducted a statewide telephone poll to assess public support for a possible California Channel. In general, the poll revealed strong support for such a channel with a majority of respondents favoring the new channel on either public broadcast or cable television. (See Chapter 1, "Need," and Appendix B.)

In addition, respondents were asked to express their preferences for various types of programming that might be carried on the new channel. The poll's findings were similar to those of focus groups. Program formats with the most appeal were issue-oriented programs, news summaries and educational programs. Formats with the least appeal were viewer call-in shows and press conferences. Live coverage of debates fell somewhere in between.

Poll responses are ranked below in order of preference. The total percentage of "very" and "somewhat" responses are indicated in parentheses.

- **In-depth analysis of important issues (84%)**
  - 54% very
  - 30% somewhat
  - 10% slightly
  - 5% not
- **News summaries (82%)**
  - 46% very
  - 36% somewhat
  - 11% slightly
  - 7% not
- **Educational programs on California government (76%)**
  - 46% very
  - 30% somewhat
  - 13% slightly
  - 9% not
- **Live coverage of debates in the Legislature (65%)**
  - 26% very
  - 39% somewhat
  - 18% slightly
  - 17% not
- **Press conferences (62%)**
  - 24% very
  - 38% somewhat
  - 18% slightly
  - 20% not
- **Viewer call-in shows (48%)**
  - 19% very
  - 29% somewhat
  - 18% slightly
  - 32% not

The poll responses may reflect to some extent respondents' familiarity with the programming formats offered by broadcast and cable television. News and issue analyses are common formats—as in the networks' evening news programs, ABC's "Nightline" and PBS' "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour." The educational format is relatively well known from PBS documentaries on the environment, toxic wastes, transportation, politics and other topics. Press



conferences may be negatively perceived because they often interrupt other more preferred television programming. Viewers may rate gavel-to-gavel coverage less favorably than other formats because they rarely see it on commercial television.

Despite the negative comments about press conferences and gavel-to-gavel coverage, C-SPAN has offered these formats for 10 years and has attracted a dedicated and growing audience. Recent live coverage of the Congressional Iran-Contra hearings and the Robert Bork Supreme Court nomination drew significant national audiences: California Channel coverage of these programming categories may actually interest audiences in programming they might otherwise tend to avoid.

## D. Conclusions

California Channel programming must be designed to fit a number of technical, financial and marketing constraints. First, and perhaps most significant, cable systems in the state—which would serve as principal distributors of California Channel programming into homes—are limited in their available channel capacity. Most cable systems would not be able to provide the California Channel with one, much less two, full-time vacant channels to carry statewide public affairs programming. As a practical matter, it will be impossible for a California Channel to air more than one *live* public affairs proceeding at a time such as simultaneous Assembly and Senate floor sessions or an Assembly floor session and a Senate committee hearing. Obviously some California Channel programming must be videotaped for transmission at a later time.

Second, some government proceedings will not be appropriate for full unedited gavel-to-gavel coverage. Substantial portions of Assembly and Senate floor proceedings, for example, involve routine matters of little interest outside Capitol hallways. To hold the attention of viewers, a California Channel must be able to transmit pertinent parts of legislative floor debates and eliminate clerical or unimportant portions.

Third, the desirability of live programming, which allows viewers to watch the transactions of government as they happen, must be balanced against the needs of viewers to see such programming in convenient time periods. Almost all public hearings and debates occur during the daytime, yet most viewers find evenings the most convenient viewing periods. Ideally, therefore, the California Channel should transmit live coverage of as many proceedings as possible during the daytime and make videotaped programming available during evening hours.

Fourth, in focus groups and a statewide public opinion poll, Californians expressed strong preferences for programming that gives them a perspective on the daily events of government. Although many believe gavel-to-gavel coverage of floor debates, committee hearings and press conferences would be important, they also stress the need for regularly scheduled newscasts, panel discussions, documentaries and viewer call-in shows. In other words, California Channel programming must do more than present unedited coverage of government proceedings. It should address a broad range of state public affairs questions in a variety of formats designed to appeal to many different viewer interests.

Fifth, Californians report that they are interested in local issues as well as statewide questions. Although it may be convenient and economically efficient to limit California Channel coverage to Sacramento-based proceedings, potential viewers have stressed the importance of broader coverage that includes city, county and regional issues. The California Channel should become a true statewide public affairs channel, addressing all matters of concern to Californians, and not just a channel that covers the proceedings of the state Legislature.

Sixth, as in all matters, the availability of financing to support California Channel programs must be weighed carefully. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative floor sessions, for example, is relatively inexpensive to produce. Once video cameras and switching equipment are installed, a small staff can generate satisfactory video coverage of the Assembly and Senate. Committee hearings are also relatively easy to produce. On the other hand, news programs, roundtable discussions, documentaries, interviews and other forms of "produced" programming require substantially more time, people and money to generate. The extent to which the California Channel carries such programming is ultimately dependent on funding.

Finally, a California Channel must rely on the voluntary consent of cable television systems to carry it. Other transmission media—commercial and public television stations, microwave distribution systems, direct broadcast satellites and fiber optic cables—either have inadequate channel capacity or do not yet reach enough viewers to justify their use. California Channel programming must therefore be made available to cable systems in a format that maximizes their willingness to carry it. Many cable systems will have to fit California Channel programming into municipal access, educational access or other partially used channels. Programming should be made available to systems in segments that facilitate taping and retransmission—in regularly scheduled two- to four-hour program blocks of definite length.

The foregoing technical, financial and marketing constraints suggest that California Channel programming should fall into two distinct categories: an *unedited and live segment*, available during weekdays whenever the Legislature, executive branch agencies, courts, county boards of supervisors and city councils are in session; and an *edited and pre-recorded segment of regular length*, available every evening at a specific time.

The daytime segment would include live and taped coverage of important governmental proceedings. It could start as early as 9 a.m. and finish by 7 p.m. It would be transmitted Mondays through Thursdays when the Legislature is in session. Included would be committee hearings, floor debates, executive branch proceedings and Supreme Court oral arguments. Whenever possible, the California Channel would attempt to present these proceedings live and in their entirety. Exceptions would be made to cut irrelevant procedural aspects or tape proceedings for airing later in the day. (If two important hearings were scheduled during the morning, for example, one could be taped for afternoon broadcast.) The

**Table 6.1**  
**Sample California Channel Programming Day: Monday\***

<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Schedule</b> (repeating text scroll of the expected coverage of the day)
<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Senate Appropriations Committee</b> (live) Testimony on bill sponsored by Kopp to increase temporarily the <b>gas tax</b> by 6¢.
<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Assembly Session</b> (live) SB 2592 (Dills) <b>Retail Credit Bill</b> would allow interest rates on retail credit card and installment accounts to rise with no limits. SB 1948 (Roberti) Requires credit card forms to be carbonless or not contain a separate piece of paper to reduce <b>credit card fraud</b> . AB 2711 (Cortese) Authorizes a study of last year's <b>earthquake</b> in Whittier. AB 2170 Requires high school sex education courses to teach <b>cellbacy</b> .
<b>1:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Senate Session</b> (live) AB 2187 (Keene) Would prohibit issuance or renewal of liquor licenses to <b>private clubs</b> that exclude women or minorities. AB 284 (Hauser) Prohibits the state from leasing tidelands in Mendocino and Humboldt counties to the federal government for <b>offshore oil drilling</b> . SB 2712 (Garamendi) Asks the voters to decide whether to increase state <b>spending on highways</b> by \$1 billion a year above the current constitutional state spending limit. AB 259 (Friedman) Requires service stations located near freeways and major highways to have clean <b>restrooms</b> available for customers.
<b>3:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Press Conference</b> (live) * Senator David Roberti announces new developments on legislation that would prohibit the manufacture and sale of <b>toy guns</b> that look like real guns.
<b>4:00 p.m.</b>	<b>"Political Action Primer"</b> (repeat) A step-by-step guide to understanding the <b>legislative process</b> and making your views known to legislators. A regularly-repeated feature.
<b>4:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Conference Coverage</b> (tape-delayed from morning) * Speech by Attorney General John K. Van de Kamp before the School/Law Enforcement Partnership Cadre conference at the Sacramento Convention Center. Topic: the need for education and law enforcement officers to join forces against <b>drug and alcohol abuse in schools</b> .
<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Senate Committee on Toxics and Public Safety</b> (tape-delayed from 2:00 p.m.) * Hearing on SJR 47, implementation of <b>asbestos management plan</b> .
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>"California Today"</b> (live with taped inserts) <b>News summary</b> of the major events from the state capital—the day's legislative actions and other events from state agencies and the courts.
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	<b>"Capital Highlights"</b> (tape-delayed) Extended excerpts from Assembly and Senate sessions, press conferences and other major government proceedings held today.
<b>8:30 p.m.</b>	<b>"Forum" Interviews and Viewer Call-Ins</b> (live) * Sen. H. L. Richardson (R-Glendora) and Sen. Leroy Greene (D-Carmichael) debate the <b>"local-porn" bill</b> , which would allow California communities to develop their own policies against pornography instead of following state standards.
<b>9:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Programming repeats 9:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m.</b> Rather than repeat the programming day, the cable system in your area may end its transmission of California Channel programming for the day, or repeat the 7–9 p.m. segment at this time. Check local schedule.

\* **Note:** This program day is a fictionalized version of legislative proceedings held the 2nd week of August 1988. Events marked with an asterisk (\*) did not occur but were based on events which did.

daytime segment would allow members of the press and other interested citizens to watch government proceedings as they occur.

The evening segment would be cablecast from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and perhaps repeated from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. As the California Channel expands, new programming could be inserted to create a four-hour block from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. The evening segment would lead off with a nightly half-hour newscast to summarize the public affairs events of the day. It would be followed by longer excerpts from floor debates, committee hearings, Supreme Court arguments, press conferences and even selected city council meetings from around the state. The evening segment could be capped with a half-hour interview, roundtable discussion or call-in program, allowing analysis and commentary by guests and viewers alike.

Although the California Channel would generally strive to present government proceedings in an unedited format, some editing and selection would be necessary for the evening programming segment. Even so, a lightly edited evening format would still allow viewers to feel informed on the important issues of the day and, at the same time, see critical events unfold without the intervention of commentators and newscasters. The sample programming day (Table 6.1), based on events from August 1988, illustrates the variety of programming that could appear on the California Channel.

During Fridays and weekends when the Legislature is not in session, the California Channel could repeat key programming generated during the week. Interviews, roundtable discussions, viewer call-ins and other forms of secondary programming could also be televised. When the Legislature is in recess, the California Channel could focus on coverage of public policy conferences, city council meetings, Supreme Court proceedings and administrative hearings of executive branch agencies and commissions. Table 6.2 presents an overview of the programming week. A more detailed sample program listing is provided in Appendix E.

A dual-segment programming format would comply with the programming constraints discussed above. Editing would be minimal and used only when necessary. Important proceedings would take precedence over routine ones. Programming would be available to cable companies at times and in formats most useful to them. (Cable systems could select the 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. segment, the 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. segment, the 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. segment, or all segments.) Reporters around the state could watch the events of the day unfold in "real time," enabling them to cover public affairs stories for local newspapers or radio and television stations. Viewers could watch live proceedings during the day or the taped and edited segments at night. If individual cable systems failed to carry specific segments, California Channel programming would still be available to homes via satellite reception dishes. This programming format would thus be available at a range of convenient times and in a series of formats most useful to California viewers and cable systems.

Table 6.2  
California Channel Programming Week

	DAYTIME SEGMENT	EVENING SEGMENT	9pm-9am: Initially, no programming. When Channel expands to 24-hour format, program day repeats.
Monday through Thursday	9am-7pm: Uncut coverage of legislative floor and committee sessions, press conferences, Supreme Court proceedings, administrative hearings, public policy conferences and city and county government meetings.	7-9pm: Half-hour news summary, one hour of extended excerpts, capped by half-hour interview/viewer call-in program.	
Friday	9am-7pm: Coverage of committees, public policy conferences and local government meetings, taped earlier in the week.	7-9pm: News summary, extended excerpts and "Sacramento Week in Review"	
Saturday and Sunday	9am-9pm: Initially no programming. As Channel expands, a "Best of the California Channel" format—highlights from the programming presented earlier in the week.		

This programming approach would also allow the California Channel to start operations on a relatively modest scale—producing only two hours of edited material every evening and transmitting live or unedited taped coverage during the mornings and afternoons. In following years, budget permitting, the amount of produced and edited programming could increase to include more newscasts, roundtable discussions, viewer call-ins, documentaries and election coverage.

The California Channel would enable viewers to watch the significant government transactions of the day, directly and without editorial intervention, as well as hear the commentaries and opinions of experts and citizens alike on important state events. A California Channel would ultimately begin to bring all of the state's citizens together, sharing a common perspective on the issues and controversies of the state.



## NOTES

1. A 1987 University of Maryland Survey Research Center study determined that 10.9 million households watch C-SPAN. This figure doubled to 21.6 million viewers during fall 1988 presidential election coverage.  
Lamb, Brian, and the staff of C-SPAN. *C-SPAN: America's Town Hall*. Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988.  
Paul Kagan Associates. "Cable Network Census: February 1989." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 131 (March 31, 1989): 10.  
Aversa, Jeannine. "C-SPAN Gaining Broader Appeal." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 2 (January 9, 1989): 25.
2. Over 100 associations and organizations held conferences at the Sacramento Convention and Visitors Bureau during 1988. The following is a partial list of statewide groups that are likely to have sponsored speakers on public affairs-related topics (list provided by the Sacramento Convention and Visitors Bureau, Feb. 1989):  
California Association of Administrators in State and Federal Education Programs  
California Association of County Drug Program Administrators  
California Association of Environmental Professionals  
California Association of Health Facilities  
California Environmental Health Association  
California Labor Federation  
California Manufacturers Association  
California Newspaper Publishers  
California Republican Party  
California School Board  
California Taxpayers Association  
California Water Pollution Control Association  
Constitutional Rights Foundation  
County Supervisors Association of California  
Government Technology Conference  
League of California Cities  
National Conference of State Legislators
3. Holley, Mary. "White Pages." *C-SPAN Update* 7, no. 1 (January 9, 1989): 1-4.
4. Moore, Nina, and Kathleen T. Schuler. *Local Government and Cable Television: A Resource Directory for California*. San Francisco: Foundation for Community Service Cable Television, 1988.
5. The City of Los Angeles, for example, has recently renewed all the cable franchises within city limits. The cable operators have agreed to make available up to two municipal access channels for use by the city and other local governmental entities. Operators will be contributing over \$1 million toward the construction of studio facilities and video equipment. Moreover, the different cable systems will interconnect their facilities so that city residents will be able to watch city council hearings on one channel simultaneously all over the city. The system is expected to be in operation by the end of 1989.
6. Kaplan, David. "The Camera is Proving Its Case in the Courtroom." *New York Times*, (October 3, 1988): 37.

Firestone, Charles. "It's Time to Open the Supreme Court to Cameras." *Broadcasting* (October 3, 1986): 23.

Scardino, Albert. "Courtroom TV Is a Fixture, Even As New York Is Deciding." *New York Times* (January 22, 1989): E-7.

7. See Rule 980, *California Rules of Court*.
8. Kaplan, p.37.
9. 2,734 of C-SPAN's 14,228 callers in 1988 hailed from California. Reported in the *C-SPAN Update*, Jan. 16, 1989, p. 2.
10. Elgin, Duane, and Ann Niehaus. "Revitalizing Democracy in the Communications Era." *Rain* (Summer 1986): 27-30. See also: Levoy, Gregg. "Forum of the Future." *Image*, (June 14, 1987): 6.
11. The responses of participants may have been influenced by the quality of the programming excerpts they viewed. For example, participants finding the excerpted gavel-to-gavel segment uninteresting may have given gavel-to-gavel coverage lower marks in general.

## **Chapter 7**

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# **Distribution of California Channel Programming: The Case for Cable Television**

Once California Channel programming is created, it must find a viable distribution path to television viewers—one that has the capacity to carry programming several hours per day and can reach television households throughout the state. Although several delivery options exist, few meet these criteria.

Programming fed by satellite to cable systems throughout the state is currently the most viable way to distribute the California Channel's proposed mix of committee hearings, floor debates and other public affairs offerings. Cable is a multichannel medium that reaches nearly 55% of national television households. It has already set a strong precedent for coverage of legislative proceedings at all levels of government. The Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network—C-SPAN, a cooperative owned by the cable industry—distributes gavel-to-gavel coverage of the U.S. House and Senate nationwide to over 3,100 cable systems.<sup>1</sup> Five of the six states that televise gavel-to-gavel legislative proceedings reach television viewers with cable. And a growing number of municipalities throughout the country cablecast city and county government meetings on government access channels.

Other transmission media, although technically capable of distributing the feed, are inappropriate carriers of the California Channel for a number of reasons. Broadcast television stations, both commercial and public, are saturated with programming. They would not have the capacity for legislative coverage, especially programming scheduled 12 or more hours per day. Various emerging media would reach far too few viewers, even within the foreseeable future, to be effective. These include the single-channel broadcast media of low power television (LPTV) and subscription television (STV), and the multichannel transmission media of satellite master antenna television (SMATV), multichannel multipoint distribution service (MMDS), direct broadcast satellite (DBS) and optical fiber.

Even though cable is a multichannel medium with a well-established infrastructure, the California Channel would still face considerable challenges in gaining acceptance as a new channel on most systems. Cable systems are subject to increasing demands for channel capacity as a burgeoning number of programming services vie for carriage on vacant channels. Estimates of California cable industry channel capacity indicate that only 20 to 30 percent of California cable systems have adequate unused channel capacity to carry the California Channel on a 24-hour per day basis. Many cable systems would, however, have the capacity to schedule the California Channel on a partially-filled channel, either an underused commercial channel or a municipal or educational access channel.

This chapter analyzes the pros and cons of various distribution paths for California Channel programming, with emphasis on cable television and the viability of dedicated versus partial channel delivery. Community access channels are explored in depth as a means to distribute California Channel programming on a part-time basis. The chapter also discusses programming challenges that would face the new public affairs channel. (Definitions of the many technical terms used in this chapter are provided in the Glossary, Appendix H.)

## **A. Options for Distributing California Channel Programming**

This study recommends that two institutions—the state Legislature and the California Channel nonprofit corporation—jointly share responsibility for generating and delivering legislative programming to California viewers. (See Chapter 11, “Implementation.”) The Legislature would generate video feeds via cameras installed in legislative chambers and committee rooms. The video signals would be routed to the Capitol control room and from there distributed on one or more channels to a closed-circuit television system throughout the Capitol.

The Legislature’s video feeds would also be transmitted from the Capitol control room to the nearby master control facility of the California Channel by microwave or optical fiber. California Channel staff would be responsible for compiling the programming for delivery to viewers throughout the state. Programming would be a mix of live and tape-delayed legislative proceedings as well as additional programming which the California Channel produces itself, such as news summaries and viewer call-in programs.

The next step in the distribution chain is to send the video feed to a transmission system capable of encompassing the entire state. While there are

several means to transmit the California Channel signal, satellites are currently the most efficient and far-reaching. The typical "footprint" of a communications satellite, beamed to earth from an orbit 22,300 miles above the equator, is more than sufficient to encompass the 800-mile length and 375-mile width of the state of California. Alternative delivery methods, microwave and optical fiber, have not yet built sufficient statewide networks to reach communities and households statewide.

The distribution chain does not end with satellite transmission. Once the video signal reaches the ground, it must find its way to viewers' television sets. The best option for the California Channel is a delivery system with sufficient channel capacity to carry new programming, as well as one that extends throughout the state and reaches into a majority of homes. Several options are evaluated here—the more common broadcast and cable television media as well as emerging transmission technologies.

Of all the transmission systems analyzed in this chapter, *broadcast television* reaches the most viewers. In California, 99% of all households have television sets and are within range of broadcast signals. Broadcast television stations could conceivably receive the California Channel feed via satellite and re-transmit it over the airwaves to homes within reach of their signals. However, both the amount (from four to 24 hours per day) and type of programming rule out commercial broadcast television as a viable means to reach viewers. The limited number of commercial television stations and the high demand for programs with advertiser appeal make such stations unsuitable for airing special purpose programming with limited viewership. To be sure, if the California Channel drew the audience and, hence, the advertising dollars of "The Cosby Show," broadcasters would clamor to air it. However, the audience for legislative programming would not be large enough to justify distribution on a single-channel advertiser-supported medium.

Although *public television* primarily carries special interest programming, it has the same spectrum scarcity limitation as commercial broadcast television and would be an inappropriate distribution vehicle for the California Channel. However, some public television stations might want to carry specific programs, for example, a daily or weekly legislative newscast. And television stations that operate a second transmitter might be willing to devote substantial portions of one station's schedule to California Channel programming.

*Low power television (LPTV)* and *subscription television (STV)* are other single-channel broadcast alternatives. Neither system reaches many viewers in California, however. In addition, both face the same commercial pressures as regular over-the-air television and would be inappropriate for the California Channel's public affairs programming fare.

*Emerging multichannel video technologies* offer several options for the delivery of the California Channel. On the face of it, the most efficient way to reach viewers with satellite-delivered programming is to transmit it directly to their homes by satellite dishes installed on rooftops. Approximately two percent of television households are equipped with satellite dishes capable of receiving programming from the various satellites that transmit cable and broadcast



network signals. Another method of direct-to-home satellite transmission, *direct broadcast satellite (DBS)*, has been proposed to deliver television programming to subscribers. Currently more common to Japan and Europe, DBS systems employ high-powered satellite transponders to transmit one to sixteen video channels to small dishes located at viewers' households. For all practical purposes, DBS systems are not yet operational in the United States, however, and would have less channel capacity than most cable systems. Neither DBS nor existing satellite dish users comprise a large enough audience to justify consideration for sole delivery of the California Channel. Other than reaching rural residents and educational institutions which routinely rely on satellite dishes to receive television programming, direct satellite delivery is not considered further here.

Other emerging transmission systems are *multichannel multipoint delivery service (MMDS)* and *satellite master antenna television (SMATV)*. MMDS systems (also called wireless cable) transmit four or more channels to subscribers in a local area via microwave. SMATV systems, typically used in large apartment complexes and hotels, acquire programming by satellite and transmit several video channels by cable to subscribers. The number of viewers currently reached by these systems, however, is negligible—under one million subscribers nationwide and substantially fewer in California.<sup>2</sup> Although these alternatives may be applicable in certain isolated situations, they are not viable for a statewide delivery system.

*Telephone system/optical fiber* delivery of video programming presents an additional option for distributing the California Channel in the future, especially if the telephone industry is further deregulated and its fiberoptic infrastructure grows. Optical fiber represents a powerful and potentially revolutionary way to transmit video signals. It exceeds coaxial cable, microwave and satellite transmissions in both spectrum bandwidth (channel capacity) and quality of signal. A single hair-width glass fiber can carry from a half dozen to, theoretically, hundreds of video channels. Several strands bundled together can generate enormous channel capacity. Optical fiber can also transmit two-way communications for voice, data and video signals over a single transmission system, thus offering the potential for a host of new consumer services. The debate over common carrier telephone provision of video services promises to be both heated and lengthy, however.<sup>3</sup> And the time when optical fiber reaches that last mile into a majority of homes has not yet arrived. Telephone system/optical fiber delivery of the California Channel, therefore, is also not considered in this report.

## **B. The Cable Advantage**

Cable television offers a number of advantages for the distribution of the California Channel to television households in contrast to the transmission options discussed above. Cable's wide frequency spectrum delivers many video channels to subscribers—from 12 channels per system to over 100. Programming currently available on cable ranges from broad appeal to special interest, with the precedent for special interest *legislative* programming already set by C-SPAN and local and state governments. Cable television is also now viewed in nearly 55% of

American homes, a penetration level which far exceeds newer video transmission technologies.<sup>4</sup>

### ***1. Multichannel Capacity and Programming Diversity***

Although much of cable programming replicates the general-appeal fare of broadcast television, cable television systems have the channel capacity to offer programming that more closely fits the special purpose, or “narrowcasting,” model. Cable networks with broad-based appeal include the USA Network and “superstations” like WTBS. Cable networks programmed in the narrowcasting mold include Arts and Entertainment (A&E), Black Entertainment Television (BET), the Discovery Channel (primarily documentaries), Nickelodeon (children’s programming) and, of course, C-SPAN.

The economic base of cable television—primarily, revenue from subscriber fees—supports more diverse programming than advertiser-supported broadcast television. Cable systems acquire programming by paying license fees ranging from 3¢ to 32¢ per subscriber per month to the cable networks. For example, cable systems pay a 4¢ per subscriber per month license fee to the Discovery Channel and 10¢ to the Arts and Entertainment network. C-SPAN’s license fee is 4¢ per subscriber per month. The Cable News Network (CNN) license fee is 23¢, and Headline News is offered free when carried with CNN. At the high end of the rate card, ESPN (sports programming) charges 32¢ per subscriber per month. Altogether, the typical cable system pays a total of 98¢ per subscriber per month to the various cable networks carried on its system.<sup>5</sup>

In turn, cable systems bill subscribers a set fee per month for the “basic” service that brings them an array of channels—usually \$12 to \$18 for 12 to 36 channels. Subscribers pay additional fees for such tiered programming services as movie channels, usually about \$10 per month for each extra channel. The typical cable household pays approximately \$25 per month to receive basic service and one additional movie channel—\$15 per month for basic and an additional \$10 for a premium channel.<sup>6</sup> Advertising income, although growing in importance to cable systems, is in second place as a revenue source, followed by pay-per-view programs and home shopping channel sales commissions. By contrast, the cable networks that supply programming to cable systems rely heavily on advertising to fund their operations. For many, advertising exceeds license fees as the primary source of revenue.<sup>7</sup>

Subscribers typically confine most of their viewing to half a dozen channels from the line-up. Cable operators package their systems to draw the largest possible number of subscribers from their market areas. While the overall package is intended to have wide appeal, the various subsets of broad-based and special purpose channels are meant to attract as many segments of the local population as possible.

The California Channel would join the programming line-up as a special purpose network which focuses on state government and other statewide public affairs issues. Cable television has already set the precedent for this type of programming. C-SPAN (U.S. House of Representatives) has been available on cable systems since 1979 and C-SPAN II (U.S. Senate) since 1986. A growing

number of communities cablecast city council and county commission meetings on government access channels. Five states carry gavel-to-gavel coverage of state legislative proceedings on cable, and many more offer other types of legislative coverage. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.")

## ***2. The California Cable Scene***

Cable is currently available to just over 70% of California households. Out of 9.8 million California households with television sets, seven million are passed by cable systems. Of these, five million households subscribe to cable television, a penetration rate of 51% of all California television households.<sup>8</sup>

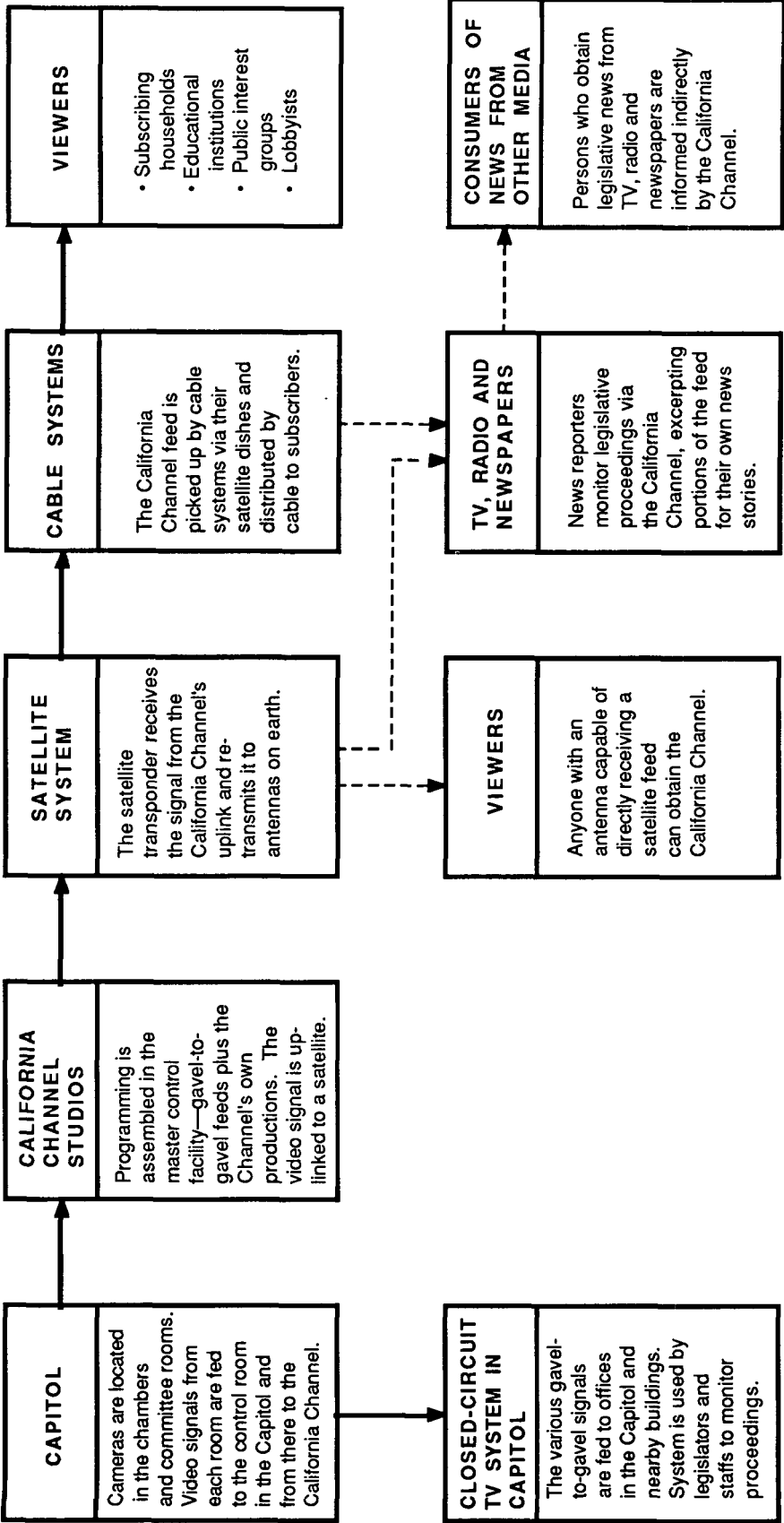
Although cable penetration is less than the national average of 55%, California is home to some of the nation's largest cable markets. Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego are among the 20 largest market areas ranked by cable households. Palm Springs and the Santa Barbara area have some of the highest cable penetration rates in the nation, each exceeding 80% of television households. The Monterey-Salinas area and San Diego rank eighteenth and nineteenth in the nation in cable penetration.<sup>9</sup>

While cable systems can potentially deliver the California Channel to nearly half the television viewers in the state, the other half of California's television households would not have direct access to its programming. Despite its many advantages, cable delivery still lacks the universality of the telephone system and the "free-of-charge" accessibility of broadcast television.

Once the California Channel is uplinked to a satellite and picked up by cable systems, however, there are many ways to increase its viewership beyond subscribing households. Interested organizations could receive California Channel programming by cable or their own satellite dishes and make the programming available to their clients or members. For example, educational institutions could use the California Channel for classroom instruction. Lobbyists and interest groups could monitor legislative proceedings to keep current on issues, passing the latest developments on to their members through newsletters, telephone messaging systems and computerized information services. Television viewers in rural areas outside the reach of cable systems could obtain the unscrambled feed directly from the satellite with their own home dishes. If the feed were made available for selective taping by television and radio news organizations—which this study recommends—many more Californians would be informed about legislative proceedings through clips inserted in broadcast news programs. Newspapers could use California Channel coverage to generate additional or more detailed stories. (These additional distribution paths are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.)

In other words, a multimedia path is the most effective way to deliver California Channel programming to the state, with cable television acting as the primary means of distribution to homes. (See Table 7.1.) Cable provides both the technical (wide spectrum) and economic (subscriber-paid) base, at least theoretically, to support special purpose programming. It already cablecasts the legislative proceedings of national and many state and local governments. And it currently reaches into nearly half of all California households.

TABLE 7.1  
DISTRIBUTION OF CALIFORNIA CHANNEL PROGRAMMING  
FROM THE CAPITOL TO VIEWERS



### ***3. Technical Considerations***

Although cable systems comprise an established statewide infrastructure and reach into nearly half of Californians' homes, crucial technical issues must be resolved before there is widespread acceptance of the California Channel by cable operators. These issues, discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, are summarized here. (Satellite and cable technical terms are defined in the Glossary, Appendix H.)

Cable systems currently obtain virtually all their programming from satellites that receive and send signals in C-band frequencies of 4 to 6 GHz. They typically aim separate antennas at three or four highly-used satellites that transmit the programming most viewed by subscribers. Because cable "birds" are expensive and in high demand, it is unlikely that the California Channel can afford to lease transponder time on them. The California Channel may have to transmit its signal via a satellite which has not been saturated with cable programming, raising the problem of cable systems lacking antennas to receive the signal. Most cable systems are not equipped to pick up programming from these C-band cable satellites or the newer, more powerful and higher frequency Ku-band satellites.

While this technical issue is a potential barrier to delivery of the California Channel, there are solutions to the dilemma. One approach may be for the California Channel to subsidize cable systems' purchase of antennas. Antenna programs have been instituted by both the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications and the Ontario Legislative Assembly to enable cable systems to receive their programming. (See Chapters 4, 5 and 9.)

## **C. Channel Capacity Limitations**

California Channel project staff interviewed nearly 30 cable industry representatives from throughout California to discuss the proposed public affairs channel. A concern expressed by many cable operators was channel capacity. Cable systems are experiencing a burgeoning supply of programming. Many have a shortage of vacant channels on which to place the new cable networks. This section examines the availability of channels to carry the California Channel and looks at a variety of time sharing options as an answer to the channel capacity dilemma.

### ***1. Limited Opportunity for Dedicated Channel Carriage***

A key issue facing the California Channel is the lack of abundant vacant channels on cable systems. When C-SPAN was launched in 1979, cable systems were actively seeking original programming of all kinds to supplement the broadcast networks they acquired off-air. Now cable systems are offered a rich array of programming from several satellite-fed services on a 24-hour per day basis.

When the California Channel enters the scene as another public affairs channel, it will find itself in a crowded and competitive marketplace. Even if cable



systems have the channel capacity to carry the California Channel, they will need to be convinced of its overall value to their systems before according it a place in their programming line-up.

**a. Analysis of California Cable System Channel Capacity Data**

Industry analyst Paul Kagan estimates that the average system size nationwide is 36 channels, with only 5 channels available for new programming. This makes vacant channels, next to paying subscribers, “the cable operator’s most valuable asset.”<sup>10</sup>

Kagan’s findings apply to California as well, although existing data are less than precise. Most cable systems in the state are tightly programmed with few unused channels to spare. Data from both the Foundation for Community Service Cable Television (FCST) of San Francisco and the *Television and Cable Factbook* indicate that only 20 to 30 percent of cable systems have a large enough surplus of unused channels to dedicate one full-time to the California Channel.

The 36-channel system is the norm for California systems, according to a recent FCST survey.<sup>11</sup> The survey gathered information from approximately two-thirds of California’s communities—342 cities and counties representing 539 cable franchises (larger cities generally extend franchises to more than one cable system). Of the 539 cable franchises represented in the survey, 266, or half, indicate that no vacant channels are available for any new programming. Of the remaining 273 systems, the number of unused channels per franchise ranges from one to over 21 channels. To summarize the FCST channel capacity data:

- 266 franchises have no vacant channels (49% of the 539 franchises responding to the survey).
- 60 franchises have 1 to 2 vacant channels (11%).
- 41 franchises have 3 to 5 vacant channels (8%).
- 58 franchises have 6 to 10 vacant channels (11%).
- 61 franchises have 11 to 20 vacant channels (11%).
- 53 franchises have 21 or more vacant channels (10%).

One or two vacancies frequently indicate channels that cannot be activated because of radio frequency interference.<sup>12</sup> Many vacant channels (21 or more) can indicate that a second cable has not been activated or that a franchise is not yet operational.

The 1989 *Television and Cable Factbook* provides another look at potential channel availability for California Channel programming.<sup>13</sup> It lists channel capacity for California’s 367 cable systems representing 1,149 communities, summarized in Table 7.2. (One cable system often serves several communities, which accounts for the lower *Factbook* numbers than the FCST data.) Appendix F contains system-specific information.

**Table 7.2**  
**California Cable Systems Channel Capacity**

<b>Channel capacity</b>	<b>No. and % of systems</b>		<b>Channels per system (median)</b>	<b>Unused channels (median)</b>	<b>Population served (median)</b>
12 or fewer channels	23	6.6%	12	0.5	1,100
13 to 24	44	12.5%	20	1.5	4,000
25 to 36	141	40.2%	35	2.0	40,000
37 to 54	87	24.8%	52	5.5	55,000
55 to 100+	56	16.0%	62	18.0	51,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>35,300</b>

Number of systems reporting channel capacity: 351 out of 367.

Number of systems reporting unused channels: 268 out of 367.

Number of systems reporting population served: 248 out of 367.

Channel capacity categories are based on typical system sizes: 12, 24, 36, 54.

Source: *Television and Cable Factbook*, No. 57. Washington, DC: Warren Publishing, 1989.

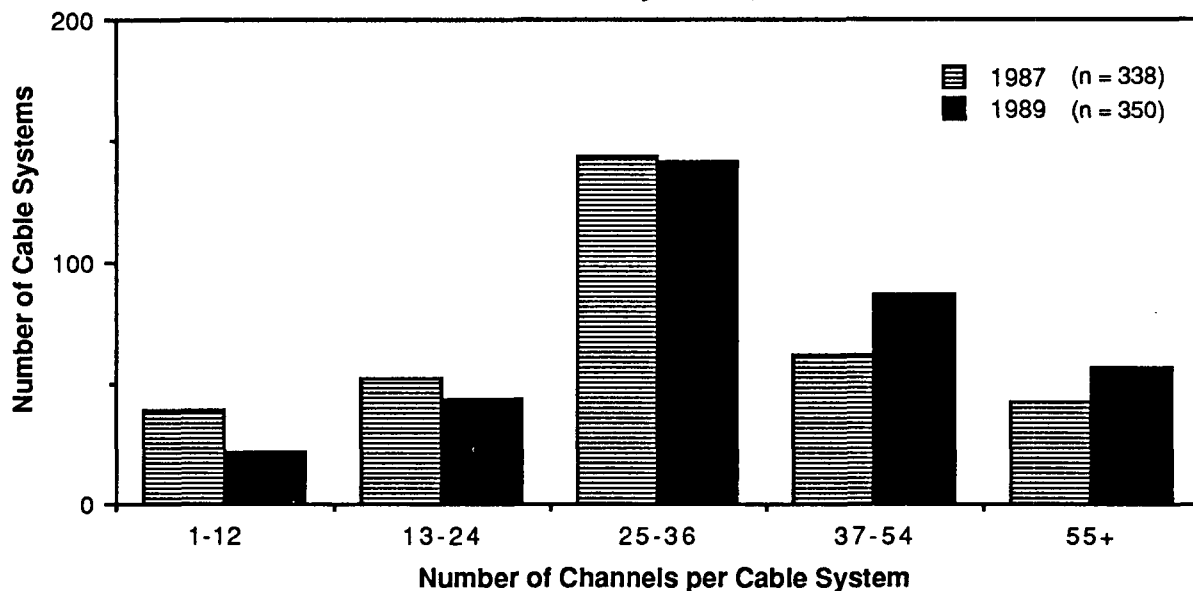
For the older and smaller 12-channel cable systems in the state, carriage of the California Channel as a dedicated channel would be a virtual impossibility. The 23 systems of this size in California are located in primarily rural and less densely populated areas. They serve populations ranging from 300 to 16,000, with a median population of approximately 1,100. The *Factbook* indicates an additional 44 systems with 13 to 24 channels—again, too small to carry the California Channel as a dedicated channel. The median population served by these systems is 4,000.

Mid-sized systems are the norm in California, according to *Factbook* figures. Capacities of 25 to 36 channels can be found on 141, or 40%, of cable systems. The median channel capacity for all California cable systems is 36 channels. Approximately two-fifths, or 143 cable systems, exceed 36 channels, with some having as many as 146 channels. The norm for large systems is 54 channels.

In northern California, systems with 24 to 36 channels are common. The largest systems in the state—located primarily in southern California—are the newest ones, with a few exceeding 100 channels. Large-capacity systems do not place programming on all their channels, however. For systems exceeding 100 channels, the maximum number of channels available to subscribers is usually between 50 and 80, with the remaining channels left vacant.

While the short range analysis may offer a bleak picture of channel capacity, the longer range view is more promising. Many limited-capacity cable systems are now being rebuilt to accommodate more channels. The number of 12-channel systems listed in the *Factbook* dropped from 39 in 1987 to 23 in 1989. The number of systems carrying more than 36 channels rose from 104 in 1987 to 143 in 1989, an increase of 38% (Table 7.3).

**Table 7.3**  
**Channel Capacity Growth:**  
**California Cable Systems, 1987 to 1989**



Source: TV & Cable Factbook.

In summary, the combined FCSCT (community-level) and *Factbook* (system-level) data indicate that only 20 to 30 percent of all cable systems in California would have a sufficient number of vacant channels to carry the California Channel full-time. The FCSCT shows 114 communities, 21% of survey responses, with 11 or more vacant channels. The 1989 *Factbook* indicates 29% of systems with 11 or more vacancies. Excess channel capacity is figured conservatively here at 11 or more vacancies to allow a margin for channels unavailable due to radio frequency interference, new programming added since the surveys were taken, a second cable not yet activated and other factors.

#### ***b. California Cable Operators' Assessment of Channel Capacity***

With many California cable systems restricted by limited channel capacity, it is little wonder that some operators interviewed for the study demonstrated less than enthusiastic willingness to carry the California Channel as a full-time *dedicated* channel on their systems. As Kent Rasmussen of Viacom Cable in Pleasanton remarked, the chance for a dedicated channel on its primarily 25- to 36-channel systems is "equal to my chance of winning the lottery." Bob McRann, head of Cox Cable of San Diego also indicated that its 36-channel system is "filled

to the brim.” There might be room for California Channel programming “between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.” on one of the existing channels, he explained . . . “maybe.” Cox and Viacom have some of the largest cable systems in the state.<sup>14</sup>

Even if cable operators have one or two channels currently vacant, they will examine very carefully what is placed on them. Many conduct extensive market research before deciding which channels to add to their systems. Ann Burr of Southwestern Cable in San Diego typified others’ views when she explained that the decision to fill its unused channels will be based on viewer preferences—programming with the broadest appeal. The cost of carrying the California Channel as a dedicated channel would be measured against opportunities lost to carry something else.

Operators of larger cable systems with several vacant channels indicated a greater willingness to carry the California Channel on a dedicated channel. And cable operators in the midst of rebuilding their systems to add channels, or with plans to do so in the next five years, were also positive about carrying the California Channel full-time in the future.

To summarize, interviews and survey data give mixed reviews to the prospect of California Channel carriage on dedicated channels. A majority of California cable systems—an estimated 70 to 80 percent using both *Factbook* and FCSCT figures—would have insufficient channel capacity. Even if the remaining 20 to 30 percent of California’s cable systems did give the California Channel a full-time channel, its programming might not reach enough viewers to justify the necessary investment of operating a 24-hour service.

## ***2. Partial Channel Solutions: Time Sharing Opportunities***

Whereas offering the California Channel to cable operators as a dedicated channel is unrealistic at this time for a majority of California systems, cable operators interviewed for the study were nearly unanimous in their approval of a programming service that could be inserted into unused or repeated portions of existing channels. “Time sharing” is commonly practiced by cable systems with limited channel capacity. Two or more programming sources are scheduled on one channel, usually in blocks of 4, 8 or 12 hours each. Sometimes shorter segments of programming sources are placed on an existing channel and shared with other programming, a practice called “cherry picking.” As one cable operator characterized it, cherry picking and time sharing mean taking the best pieces from the best sources and putting them on one channel.<sup>15</sup>

Cox Cable in San Diego, a 36-channel system with little room to spare, uses time sharing and cherry picking to program its Rainbow Channel. The channel is composed of KNBC-TV (Los Angeles) in the early morning, then VH-1 music video during late morning, C-SPAN II at mid-day, followed by local programming in prime time evening hours and Black Entertainment Television during the late evening and overnight hours. During the weekend, this channel primarily features religious programs and the multi-ethnic programming of KSCI from Los Angeles. Century Cable in Santa Monica—another tightly programmed 35-channel system—places the Financial News Network, Prime Ticket and the

Nashville Network on one channel. American Movie Classics and the Travel Channel share another channel.

Potential time sharing opportunities for the California Channel exist with programming sources that are available for only a portion of the day and for those that repeat their programming during the day. Arts and Entertainment (A&E), a basic programming service that is repeated in four-hour blocks, offers one such example. Depending on the license agreement, cable systems either cablecast A&E eight hours a day, showing two four-hour blocks, or continuously repeat the feed for 24 hours.

C-SPAN repeats its programming during evenings and weekends. Some systems already combine a portion of C-SPAN with other programming. The cities of San Diego and Beverly Hills, for example, share C-SPAN with local government programming on municipal access channels. Appealing as it might be to combine state legislative and Congressional programming on one channel, the option is not necessarily a viable one. C-SPAN is a 24-hour per day network that discourages cable systems from segmenting its programming. It now prohibits this practice for any newly subscribing cable systems, although existing time sharing practices will be allowed to continue.<sup>16</sup> C-SPAN II does not prohibit time sharing, however, and could be considered a potential partner with the California Channel on the 61 systems in the state that carry it.

Several cable operators indicated municipal access channels would be a likely spot for the California Channel. Most of these channels are not fully programmed. Cable operators and access channel administrators might welcome an additional programming source on a time sharing basis, especially programming which is government-related. Educational access channels offer another time sharing option. (See further discussion of access channels in the next section.)

Cable operators made several suggestions for successful carriage of the California Channel on a time sharing basis. The California Channel will need a "secure home." If time schedules and channel assignments are periodically moved, viewers become confused and frustrated. Audience building would be more successful if the California Channel were placed on a channel with existing programming. Sandwiching it between time periods when character-generated messages are cablecast would not be desirable. Cable operators also stated their preference for a consistently packaged programming source, made available in 4-, 8- or 12-hour segments and offered at the same time each day for immediate cablecasting or taping and transmission later.

Although time sharing represents the most realistic approach for California Channel carriage on a majority of cable systems, particularly in early stages of channel development, it needs to be evaluated carefully as a long-term solution. Many successful programming networks evolve into 24-hour services and, like C-SPAN, either discourage or prohibit segmenting their feeds. As city government programming grows, there may be less space on municipal access channels for the California Channel. The opportunities for time sharing, given the burgeoning supply of programming sources and the current channel shortage, may become more limited in the future. At the same time, however,



many systems are rebuilding, thereby increasing potential space for the California Channel.

With few exceptions, cable operators interviewed for the study supported the concept of partial-day California Channel programming packaged in well-defined segments. They want the freedom to place it into their programming line-ups in a manner most appropriate to their systems' channel capacity and programming mix. If the California Channel is flexibly packaged and offered as a reliable programming source with few restrictions on its use, cable operators appear receptive to adding it to their systems. With these provisos, even operators of cable systems with extremely limited channel capacity said they would be able to "make room for it."<sup>17</sup>

## **D. Community Access Channels: A Potential Time Sharing Solution on Many Systems**

One option for part-time carriage of the California Channel deserves special mention: the use of vacant or underutilized community access channels administered largely by local governments. Community access channels are available on approximately two-thirds of California cable systems as part of basic cable service, according to Foundation for Community Service Cable Television data. Access channels range from a single channel carrying several types of access programming to as many as six channels on one system, each dedicated to specific functions.

Of the three types of community access channels—public, educational and government—government access channels (also known as municipal channels) offer a promising time sharing option for the California Channel. Most are only partially filled with video programming while the rest of the day's schedule consists of a repeating scroll of character-generated messages.

Project staff interviewed 24 municipal access channel administrators regarding the proposed California Channel. With few exceptions, these administrators, employed by local governments, supported the idea of cablecasting legislative programming on unused or repeated segments of government access channels—depending, of course, on such factors as program content, ease of use and cost. This section presents the concerns of California municipal access channel administrators, following an overview of access channels. It also discusses the viability of carriage on educational and public access channels.

### **1. Background on Access Channels**

The concept of access channels dedicated to local programming is longstanding. In 1972, the Federal Communications Commission's *Cable Television Report and Order* required cable systems with 3,500 or more subscribers to set aside no fewer than three channels for local programming—one each for public, educational and government use, known collectively as PEG channels.<sup>18</sup> In 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Federal Communications Commission v. Midwest Video Corp. (Midwest Video II)* ruled that access channel requirements and channel capacity rules were beyond the jurisdiction of

the FCC under the *Communications Act of 1934*.<sup>19</sup> Although the access channel requirements were overturned, community channels had already become an established part of cable television and continued to flourish as cities themselves required them in cable franchises.<sup>20</sup>

The *Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984* struck a middle ground between federally mandated access channels and an unrestricted First Amendment freedom of choice position for cable operators.<sup>21</sup> It allows, but does not require, local franchising bodies to make access channels a condition for receiving a cable franchise. In the last few years, most California municipalities have instituted strong access channel requirements.

Although studies of access channel usage are scarce, two recent studies provide a look at how they are used by viewers and municipalities. Western Michigan University's National Clearinghouse for Community Cable Audience Research has compiled findings on access channel usage from 45 cable markets throughout the country.<sup>22</sup> Clearinghouse data show that access channels are found primarily on medium to large cable systems. The average channel capacity for systems with access channels is 44.3, larger than the national average of 36 channels. The average number of channels devoted to community programming is 3.7 per system.

Clearinghouse data indicate that 65% of cable subscribers are aware of access channels and about half of them have watched community programming at one time or another. Two-thirds of these tuned in to an access channel (any one of the PEG channels) within two weeks of the survey date. Local government meetings rank highest (41%) in programming categories watched by access channel viewers. Arts and entertainment programs are a close second (38%), followed by local sports events and educational programming (35%), tied for third place. (Percentages exceed 100% because of multiple answers by respondents.)

The fall 1987 FCSCT survey provides a California-specific picture of municipalities' usage of access channels. Nearly 70% of California's municipalities (237 of 342 communities responding to the survey) operate at least one activated channel devoted to some type of access programming—either a dedicated government, educational or public access channel, or a channel which combines two or all of these functions ("combined access" channel). Most systems provide at least two access channels, with some operating as many as nine. One-third of the systems operate one access channel, usually a public or combined access channel. As Table 7.4 illustrates, combined channels are the most common type of access channels operated by California municipalities.

## ***2. California Channel Carriage on Government Access Channels***

Of the three types of access channels—public, educational and government—government access channels provide the strongest possibility for carriage of California Channel programming. Cable operators and government access channel administrators alike view these channels favorably for California Channel carriage. Many government access channels are already seeking programming to fill blank air time. The addition of state government program-

**Table 7.4**  
**California Municipalities Access Channel Usage**

Type of access channel	No. of activated channels	No. of communities w/ channels	Percent of communities w/channels n = 342 (1)
Combined access	270	156	46%
combined access with gov't. programming	(112)	(108)	(32%)
combined access with no gov't. programming	(158)	(154)	(45%)
Government access	80	71	21%
Public access	71	67	20%
Educational access	67	54	16%
Religious programming	21	14	4%
Library programming	4	4	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>237 (2)</b>	<b>69% (2)</b>

Source: Moore, Nina, and Kathleen T. Schuler. *Local Government and Cable Television: A Resource Directory for California*. San Francisco: Foundation for Community Service Cable Television, 1988.

(1) 342 cities and counties representing 539 franchises responded to the survey—70% return.

(2) Because most communities have more than one access channel, the sums of these columns exceed the totals indicated.

ming would be a “natural sell,” mutually beneficial to both city and state government.<sup>23</sup> This section reviews government access channel usage and summarizes the concerns of cable operators and access channel administrators.

#### ***a. Overview of Government Access Channels***

Government access channels are programmed by local governments as a public service for the community. They are administered either by the city or the cable company. Typical municipal access channel programming consists of a mix of video programs, both live and replay, and a character-generated scroll to fill out the non-video portion of the schedule. Text messages provide a variety of announcements, such as city council and other meeting schedules, jobs available in city government and reminders regarding city services.

Video programming includes coverage of city council, county board of supervisors and other meetings as well as informational programs. City department-sponsored programs might feature the police department on crime awareness, the library on its informational and cultural services, the water department on conservation techniques and the fire department on earthquake survival.

The number of municipalities cablecasting city council meetings either live or tape-delayed is growing. According to a recent City of Chicago survey, 17 of the

30 largest U.S. municipalities bring city council meetings into local cable subscribers' homes.<sup>24</sup> The fall 1987 FCSCT survey identified 80 California cities and counties with dedicated government access channels and an additional 112 with local government programming on combined access channels. In all, 122 California municipalities cablecast local government meetings.

The funding level of government access channels varies widely throughout California. Actively used channels are allocated a yearly budget by the city council to support a full-time staff and production costs for original programming. A typical funding scheme might dedicate 40% of the five percent franchise fee (paid by the cable system to the city) for access programming.

Less active channels might be budgeted for specific functions like coverage of city council meetings. Generally, these channels do not have full-time staff. Rather, staff members share duties with other departments, such as public information. In communities with less active access channels, government programming is often combined with educational and public access programming on one channel. Cable systems often assist access channels by providing technical assistance, loans of equipment and staff and start-up funds to get channels off the ground. In municipalities which do not support access channels, access functions are sometimes handled entirely by the cable system which both funds and operates access programming.

#### ***b. Shelf Space Considerations***

FCSCT data show that no government access channels in California are fully programmed.<sup>25</sup> Cities providing survey information report that live video programming is cablecast an average of eight hours per week, with replay programming averaging 25 hours per week. The daily video fare of live, tape-delayed and repeated programs averages less than five hours per day. Character-generated information, the predominant form of government access programming, fills the remainder of the day. California cities providing in-depth survey information report that character-generated announcements are cablecast an average of 108 hours per week, or 15.5 hours per day.

Interviews of 24 municipal access channel administrators elicited generally positive responses toward carriage of California Channel programming. Systems with access channels dedicated to government programming would have the most ability to carry the California Channel feed, although none said they would be willing to devote the entire channel to state legislative programming. Combined access channels—those which share public, educational and government programming on one channel—would have less space for the California Channel. Regular time slots on these channels are in scarce supply.

Administrators of dedicated government access channels seek appropriate programming to fill the time now allotted to the text scroll. At the same time, they are fiercely protective of their prime time programming. Evening hours are generally programmed with locally originated and imported programming. Many city council meetings take place at night, which makes shelf space during this time period even more precious. Despite these factors, many municipal



programmers indicated they would consider inserting a 30- or 60-minute news summary or call-in program into their prime time if it were well-produced.

The competition for time during the rest of the day and weekend hours is not nearly as severe on most dedicated government access channels. Programmers would be willing to insert larger segments of the California Channel feed, including gavel-to-gavel proceedings, into these hours. While some municipal programmers would treat the California Channel feed as a regularly scheduled part of their cablecasts, others would take a more *ad hoc* approach. Many perceive gavel-to-gavel coverage as uninteresting and would cablecast it only when an issue touched a vital local concern or sparked lively debate. Others would use the feed as a "wrap" for locally produced programming, similar to the practice of using C-SPAN to wrap around local programming.

San Diego and Beverly Hills, for example, currently divide their government channels between local programming and C-SPAN. They report, however, that this practice has its disadvantages. Viewers become accustomed to seeing C-SPAN and are upset when it is preempted by local programs.

While municipal programmers were generally enthusiastic about the California Channel as a source of programming, they cautioned that this opportunity is not likely to last forever. The trend for many municipalities is toward increased locally originated programming. Accordingly, most municipalities would not be willing to make a long term commitment to share a large part of their schedule with any one imported service.

### ***c. Program Format Preferences***

Like cable operators, municipal channel administrators expressed a desire for a programming package that allows them the flexibility to place portions of the feed into their regular line-ups. They indicated that 30- and 60-minute programs could be readily inserted into holes in their existing schedules.

Gavel-to-gavel programming was not highly preferred by municipal programmers. Most favored a daily or weekly news summary and a week-in-review format, similar to the former "California Week in Review." Viewer call-in shows are popular among many municipal programmers and were recommended as a means to foster legislator-constituent communications. Several access channels currently produce call-in programs featuring local government leaders, a service that supports the channel's role as facilitator of communication between the local government and citizens. A number of programmers expressed concern over the dangers of slanted editorial control. They warned against such programs becoming a soap box for partisan viewpoints.

Municipal programmers also recommended that the California Channel cablecast informational and educational programs relevant to life in California. Their suggestions included: how a bill becomes law, the functions and operations of various state agencies such as the highway patrol and state general assistance programs, fire and earthquake preparedness and well-produced documentaries on regional and state issues.



#### ***d. Technical and Cost Considerations***

Few municipal access channels have their own satellite dishes to acquire the California Channel feed directly, and most lack the funding to purchase antennas. Municipal channels typically receive their programming via mailed video tapes. To receive a California Channel feed, most would have to rely on the cable company itself for satellite access. In communities where a usage agreement could not be reached with the cable company, an access channel might be able to use the antenna of another city agency, such as the fire or police department (many already have satellite dishes for training programs).

Municipal programmers expressed a strong desire for free access to California Channel programming. Only the most active municipal access channels are budgeted to purchase programming. As FCSCT data indicate, these channels are few in number. Most operate on low budgets, and those which obtain imported programming generally rely on free tape libraries.

The funding picture may be brightening, however. More local franchises, as they are renewed, are requiring cable companies to provide access channels and funding. Facilities and production capabilities of government access channels are also improving. Yet, as budgets increase and more original local programming is produced, imported programming such as the California Channel may become less desirable. It may, therefore, be realistic to view municipal access channels as a promising option for California Channel carriage in the near future, but one which could disappear as municipal channels outgrow their need for imported programming.

### ***3. Educational Access Channels: Bringing California Government to the Classroom***

Educators from elementary school to the college level can use the California Channel to enrich course work with up-to-the-minute footage of state government in action. Its programming would provide a logical complement to political science, civics and social studies curricula as well as speech, debate and English courses. Further applications at the college level are courses in environmental studies, business law, urban planning and journalism.

The FCSCT survey shows 67 California cable franchises with dedicated educational access channels. The addition of the California Channel to existing educational access channels would not only broaden their programming, but also introduce legislative proceedings to a classroom audience, ideally, fostering a lifelong interest and participation in the democratic process.

Educators interviewed for this report were enthusiastic about the potential uses of California Channel programming. They offered suggestions on how best to package the service for educators. This section explores the opportunities that exist for delivery of California Channel programming to educational systems via cable systems. Direct access to the California Channel by satellite is explored in the next chapter.

### ***a. The Tradition of Educational Cable Programming***

Educational programming is no stranger to cable television. It reaches the cable viewer by two routes—the cable industry itself and local educational access channels. Cable industry educational programming is primarily non-classroom oriented and includes Nickelodeon and the Discovery Channel. The Learning Channel (TLC) is structured in the more traditional classroom approach and provides a variety of adult-oriented courses, both for credit and non-credit. (Some cable systems give TLC to educational access channels free of charge because it attracts subscribers.) C-SPAN reaches into the classroom with its Close-Up program, offering curriculum packages and events to increase elementary and high school students' understanding of Congress.

Educational access channels provide another avenue for instructional programming on cable television. These channels are administered either by cable systems or local educational institutions—a school district, college or consortium of institutions. A primary use is “distance learning”—reaching the adult student at home or in the workplace with a variety of learning packages. Educational access channel programming includes locally-produced and imported courses for credit, homework hotlines geared to current curricula and faculty training. Non-instructional uses include outlets for student productions, promotion of school activities, student recruitment and videoconferencing. Some channels provide general community programming, not necessarily tied to the course offerings of the participating schools and colleges.

### ***b. Uses of Cable by California Educational Institutions***

Although many educational access channels are only partially used, some are ambitiously programmed.<sup>26</sup> Both the Orange and San Diego County school districts, for example, are active users of educational access channels. They provide pre-recorded courses, homework assistance programs, promotion of school activities and faculty development opportunities to area cable viewers.

Other educational institutions have formed consortia to share resources for the most effective use of access channels on the area's cable systems. The Lakewood Educational Technology Consortium combines the efforts of school districts in four neighboring communities served by two cable systems. Public schools and community colleges in the Silicon Valley have formed the Telecommunications Learning Consortium to transmit programming to an area served by four cable systems. The Foothills Media Services Network (Glendale area) and the Mendocino Coast Community and Educational Television Network are examples of other combined public school and community college consortia. In Huntington Beach, the high school and elementary school districts have formed the Joint Council of Educational Technology. And 17 Sacramento County K-12 school districts plus community colleges, museums, libraries and other cultural and educational institutions have organized the Sacramento Educational Cable Consortium (SECC). This nonprofit organization provides up to 50 hours per week of programming on the educational access channel.

Eleven of the 19 California State University (CSU) campuses are associated with cable franchises by either programming a dedicated channel for university

use or providing programming for distribution throughout the franchise area. CSU-Long Beach, for example, uses its cable channel for student recruitment, promotion of school activities and educational programming for business, nonprofit and government organizations. San Francisco State provides pre-recorded courses and character-generated announcements of school activities. CSU-Sacramento participates in the Sacramento area consortium, SECC.

Dedicated educational access channels are relatively few in number on California cable systems. Not all are adequately funded or fully programmed. Nonetheless, these examples of educational channel usage demonstrate the promise of cable television for instructional purposes.

### ***c. What Educators Say About the California Channel***

Many California educational institutions from elementary schools through the college level are already capable of receiving California Channel programming, either from cable systems or directly off the satellite. (See Chapter 8.) But are educators interested? The answer appears to be an enthusiastic "yes." California Channel interviews elicited positive responses from representatives of educational consortia, the CSU system and public television.

Mike Holler of the Telecommunications Learning Consortium (Silicon Valley) said its consortium of three community college districts and six campuses would have "an enormous use for programming from the state Legislature. It would be a tremendous learning resource." Another Bay Area educational programmer, Roger Ferragallo of Peralta Colleges Television, also expressed strong interest. Its network—representing colleges and universities in Berkeley, Oakland, Emeryville and Piedmont—currently feeds a signal to three cable systems over two microwave transmitters.

Educators interviewed for the study identified a variety of uses for California Channel programming in addition to supplementing the curricula of political science, civics, social studies and speech classes. According to Elizabeth Rhodes of SECC, it would be far easier to bring the proceedings of the Legislature into the classroom via a television monitor than to "drag all the kids down to the Capitol." Pat Chaix of the Folsom-Cordoba School District indicated that the California Channel would be an extremely valuable tool to monitor education-related legislation from afar—giving educators up-to-the-minute information on facilities funding measures, new educational programs and school standards.

Educators reached no consensus regarding the most useful programming format for educational use. Some preferred gavel-to-gavel coverage so faculty can tape and edit material based on their particular needs. Others suggested that shorter edited pieces complete with "actualities" be packaged by the California Channel for use by schools—ideally one-half hour in length to fit class schedules. Jill Henricks of the Lakewood Educational Technology Consortium preferred call-in shows geared to schools—possibly a different legislator each week who could answer questions and discuss issues with students. This approach, she noted, "would help kids realize that one person can make a difference."

Educators stressed the need for advance publicity of legislative schedules so specific issues and debates can be appropriately placed into course curricula. But

cable operators would need legislative schedules six weeks in advance to include them in published program guides. Since such notice would be impossible to achieve, educators at least want the flexibility to tape proceedings freely for use at a later date. Some would prefer to receive the feed directly from the satellite rather than the cable system and requested that the California Channel not restrict this practice. Because usage fees would prohibit many systems from using the California Channel feed, educators recommended that the California Channel be available to them free of charge or at least for a nominal fee.

#### ***4. Public Access Channels: Inappropriate for the California Channel***

Of the three types of PEG channels, public access channels are specifically set aside for use by the general community. Advocates of community television envision public access channels as an electronic forum akin to a soap box on the town square, a means for community groups to communicate with their members and reach out to others.

Programming produced by local labor unions, environmental groups, computer hobbyist clubs, surfing enthusiasts, book aficionados, ethnic minorities, senior citizens, alternative artists and political groups is but a small sampling of public access channel fare. Individuals not necessarily associated with organized groups are also users of these channels.

Foundation for Community Service Cable Television survey data show 71 California cable franchises with dedicated public access channels. As many as 270 additional systems offer some form of public access on combined access channels.

Public access channels are administered either by cable companies themselves or nonprofit access corporations. Members of the general public acquire time on these channels on a first-come first-served basis. Actual usage of public access channels varies. In some Los Angeles area communities, for example, public access channels are heavily programmed with a long waiting list of new entries. In other communities, channel time goes begging.

Regardless of availability, the use of public access channels by the California Channel is not feasible. Public access channels are expressly set aside for use by members of the community, and insertion of public affairs programming on state government would not be appropriate. Public access channels are, therefore, not considered as a viable means to deliver California Channel programming to viewers.

#### ***5. Summary of Cable Access Channel Options***

Government access channels offer a promising berth for part-time carriage of the California Channel, especially in its beginning stage. Over one-half of the state's cable systems carry government programming, according to FCSCT data, either on a dedicated government channel or a combined access channel. Many lack consistent sources of programming and might be able to carry the California Channel on a time sharing basis. The most active government access channels are generally in the larger urban areas where a majority of the state's population



resides. While many communities do not yet have dedicated municipal channels, their number is growing as franchises are renewed and access requirements strengthened.

Municipal programmers indicate strong support and enthusiasm for the California Channel, especially if they are free to select segments of the feed. They prefer high quality half-hour to one-hour programs like news summaries and call-in shows, but they would also use gavel-to-gavel feeds to fill longer blocks of blank scheduling. Municipal programmers stress that the California Channel should be available free of charge. And it should include programming that is relevant to the local community.

As locally originated governmental programming grows, municipal access channels might ultimately drop the California Channel or reduce its carriage. In the meantime, however, carriage by municipal access channels would appear to be mutually beneficial to both the California Channel and local governments.

Although there are fewer dedicated educational access channels on California cable systems than government access channels, they, too, offer a possibility for part-time carriage of the California Channel. Given the enthusiastic responses of educators interviewed for the study, televised legislative proceedings appear to have a place in educational institutions at all levels of instruction. Depending upon unused educational access channel capacity, the packaging of California Channel programming and any restrictions placed on the use of the feed, administrators of educational channels indicated they would find a place for the California Channel on their systems.

The third type of cable access channel, public access, is not appropriate for California Channel carriage. Public access channels are expressly set aside for use by the general public, not for government programming.

## **E. Programming Considerations**

Sufficient channel capacity for either full- or part-time carriage does not ensure that cable operators or access channel administrators will carry the California Channel. Programming content is another key factor in their decision-making process.

### ***1. The Programming Niche***

Cable operators stress that the uniqueness and value of a new programming source must be demonstrated before it will be added by cable systems. The cable industry sees its strength as offering programming exclusive to cable. Cable operators, therefore, seek programming that fills a niche not covered by existing services and that is differentiated both from the rest of their programming and from other entertainment and information-oriented media. They also look at a new channel's promotion and marketing support, the opportunity for direct revenue like local advertising, the service's overall management and economic stability and its community service potential.<sup>27</sup>

C-SPAN II, which cablecasts the U.S. Senate, illustrates several points regarding cable operators' decisions to add new programming. The channel was



launched in 1986. Even though it is offered free of charge to systems that carry C-SPAN full-time, only 581 systems nationwide carry C-SPAN II compared to over 3,100 for C-SPAN, available since 1979. In California, C-SPAN II is carried on 61 systems compared with 236 for C-SPAN. Cable operators cite shortage of shelf space and lack of viewer interest as the principal reasons for not carrying C-SPAN II. In addition, C-SPAN II generates no revenue and is seen by operators as a second public affairs channel with programming that is not substantially different from C-SPAN.

Cable operators recognize that public affairs programming like C-SPAN and the proposed California Channel offer a service to the community as well as political benefits to the cable industry. C-SPAN, however, is not universally popular with cable operators. Some operators believe it is not of much interest to a majority of their subscribers. They are reluctant to carry and pay for a service that larger audiences do not watch. Even when local operators support public affairs programming as a community service, some corporate home offices (which may be headquartered in other states) are reportedly more interested in adding channels that contribute to the company's overall profit margin.

Part of the challenge facing the California Channel, therefore, is to demonstrate that it fills a needed and desirable programming niche. Two studies conducted for the California Channel project indicate that the proposed public affairs channel would indeed fill a programming void. The media analysis (Chapter 2) shows that a vacuum exists for media coverage of state legislative proceedings. Public opinion polls also indicate that Californians feel uninformed about state government and would support a state public affairs channel.<sup>28</sup> While the California Channel would probably never deliver ratings-busting programs, these studies suggest that it would comprise a unique and valuable programming service.

## ***2. Viewers of Public Affairs Programming***

Another challenge facing the California Channel is to demonstrate potential viewer interest. Although it is difficult to analyze the viewership of a nonexistent channel, demographic data from similar public affairs television programming provide some clues to the characteristics of potential viewers.

Viewership studies conducted by C-SPAN and other states which provide similar legislative programming show that a small but significant percentage of viewers regularly watch such programming. (See Chapters 3, "C-SPAN," and 4, "Other States.") A 1987 C-SPAN survey showed, for example, that one-third of all cable subscribers with access to C-SPAN watched the network. In 1988, a presidential election year, this number rose dramatically to half of all cable subscribers.<sup>29</sup>

Closer to home, the California Channel's public opinion poll conducted in November 1987 found that three-fourths of survey respondents were "very" or "somewhat" interested in a statewide public affairs channel. One-fourth of those who have access to cable but have chosen not to subscribe indicated they would be more likely to subscribe to cable if it carried the California Channel. (See Chapter 1, "Need.") With cable systems working hard to attract even five percent more

subscribers, these polls suggest that the California Channel might be an attractive financial draw for cable systems.

Viewer profiles are perhaps more significant than actual viewer numbers. According to demographic profiles compiled by C-SPAN and other states, viewers of legislative programming are generally well-educated, above average in income and politically active and influential in public life. Although relatively small in number, cable operators are aware of the value of these viewers to their systems. Viewers of special purpose programming also tend to be loyal long-term subscribers. Many subscribe to cable solely to receive such special purpose programming as C-SPAN or the Discovery Channel.

The cable industry is also aware that the untapped market of potential cable subscribers differs from the 55% who currently watch cable television.<sup>30</sup> Well-targeted special purpose programming plays a key role in attracting non-subscribers—both former “subs” and “never-subs.” The California Channel may therefore attract public affairs programming devotees, similar in profile to C-SPAN viewers, who have not yet subscribed to cable. It may also attract non-subscribers disenchanted with commercial broadcast television, who watch primarily PBS, if any, television, and have not yet found cable to satisfy their interest in informational programming.

While the demographic data portray a viewership profile of a small and specialized audience, a growing body of evidence indicates that the audience for government-related programming like C-SPAN is increasing. Because of financial constraints, public affairs programming is generally not able to promote itself to the same extent as the more lucrative entertainment-oriented cable channels and commercial broadcast networks. Viewers are often attracted by word of mouth or serendipitous channel-flipping, processes that draw viewers at a slower rate than concerted advertising campaigns. A 1987 audience survey of San Diego City Council cablecast meetings showed, for example, that 71% of viewers became aware of the city government meetings by chance when scanning the channel line-up. Another 11% watched at the suggestion of friends or relatives. Nearly all viewers (90%) said they would watch more of the televised meetings in the future.<sup>31</sup>

Controversial events also attract viewers to public affairs programming. The Iran-Contra hearings and the Robert Bork Supreme Court nomination proceedings drew many first-time viewers to C-SPAN and introduced them to the gavel-to-gavel programming format. C-SPAN's 1988 presidential coverage also attracted many new viewers. Survey data gathered after its election coverage showed that C-SPAN viewership doubled from the previous year and that viewers represented more of mainstream America than earlier demographic profiles had indicated.<sup>32</sup>

Whether drawn by newsworthy events, word of mouth, chance discovery or the limited advertising that is available, many new viewers continue to tune in to government programming once they are introduced to it. Viewership increases, not by leaps and bounds, but by a slow and steady process fueled by growing viewer awareness.

These factors point to a number of marketing challenges for the proposed California Channel. It must convince cable operators of the value of its programming and the nature of its potential viewer profile. And it must reach cable subscribers and non-subscribers alike with the message that the California Channel is a unique source of programming for state public affairs issues.

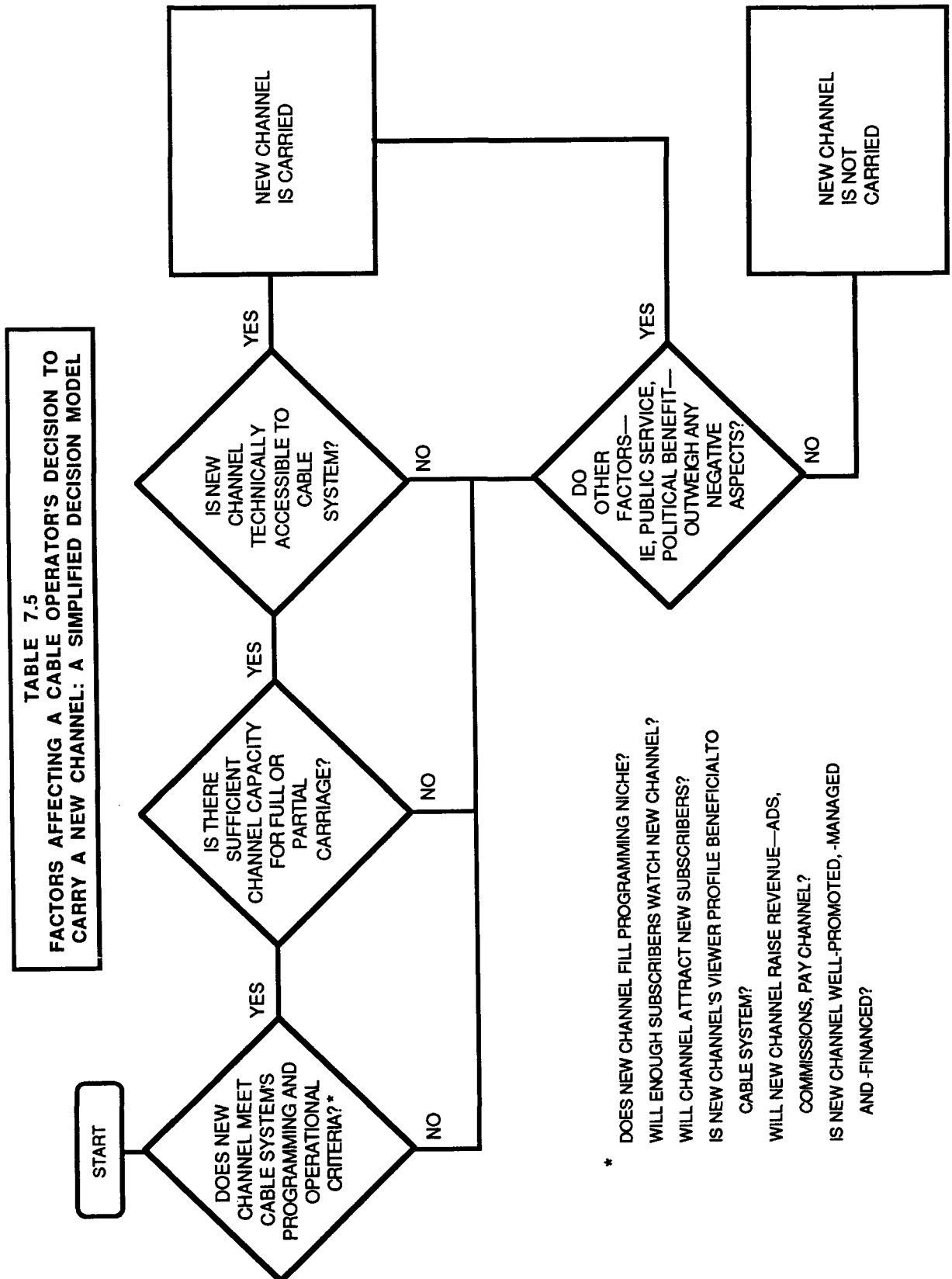
### ***3. The Importance of Locally-Relevant Programming***

Cable operators interviewed for the California Channel study stressed that coverage of locally significant legislative news would help to capture viewer interest. Several operators were skeptical of the California Channel's success if it covered only general legislative issues (non-locale specific) or allowed issues of one geographic area to dominate over another. The need for geographically diverse and balanced coverage presents a challenge to the California Channel, especially since nearly half the state's 28 million population and a similar proportion of its legislative representatives are in the five-county Los Angeles area.

By its nature, gavel-to-gavel coverage cannot be selected or edited for the purpose of balancing regional coverage because of the danger of biasing the presentation of legislative proceedings. However, the California Channel's *own* programming, such as news summaries and call-in programs, should be sensitive to presenting issues relevant to all geographic regions of the state. In addition, the California Channel may want to explore the technical and logistical aspects of transmitting geographic-specific feeds—for example, separate weekly one-hour summaries on issues pertinent to northern, central and southern California. These "regional round-ups" could be transmitted at times during the week when the satellite transponder is not being used for regular California Channel programming, as in the early morning hours. Cable systems could tape these regional feeds and show them during a regular time slot each week.<sup>33</sup>

Ethnic diversity, another challenge for California Channel programming, could conceivably be met in similar fashion. Florida Public Television, for example, airs two versions of its weekly legislative news wrap-up, one in English and one in Spanish.

The variety of factors that affect a cable operator's decision to carry a new channel are charted in Table 7.5. Ensuring carriage of the California Channel by cable operators is not solely an issue of sufficient channel capacity or technical accessibility. Carriage also hinges on programming uniqueness and niche-filling capability as well as the value of the potential viewership profile. The California Channel would appeal to current subscribers who are primarily interested in public affairs programming. If marketed aggressively, it could also attract non-subscribers not yet drawn to cable. Coverage of issues of local and ethnic interest will increase its attractiveness to viewers.



## F. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the challenges inherent to distributing the California Channel throughout the state. It concludes that cable television is most appropriately positioned to be the primary delivery mechanism for state government programming. The California Channel's success as a new programming source, however, will rest on the willingness of cable operators to carry it. Limits on existing cable channel capacity, attractiveness of programming and adequate viewer interest are all factors that cable operators will consider. Municipal and educational access channels offer promising berths for part-time carriage of the new programming service, at least initially. (Funding, also a key consideration, is discussed separately in Chapter 10.)

In conclusion, the following issues must be addressed by California Channel planners to foster acceptance by cable systems:

*Limited availability of dedicated channels and the necessity of time sharing.* It is not realistic to market the California Channel as a dedicated channel, especially in its early stages. Because many California cable systems currently have limited channel capacity, the California Channel must be formatted to enable them to combine it with other programming sources—the practice of time sharing. Therefore, the California Channel should be packaged and scheduled so cable systems can easily insert it into existing channels—ideally, in well-defined segments of 4, 8, or 12 hours which are transmitted at the same time each day.

*Municipal channel carriage as a part-time option.* Municipal access channels offer great promise for California Channel carriage. The California Channel should work closely with local government officials to ensure part-time carriage on underutilized municipal access channels. The California Channel might also serve as a statewide interconnected access channel by transmitting city council meetings of special interest to a statewide audience. (See Chapter 6, "Programming.")

Because municipal access channels are not available in every community, this option should not be viewed as a total solution to the channel capacity dilemma. A variety of carriage options must be explored with cable systems of all sizes to maximize the California Channel's availability throughout the state.

*The California Channel in the classroom.* Educational access channels offer another alternative for part-time carriage. Educators responded enthusiastically to the potential for bringing legislative proceedings into the classroom. They cited ease of access via cable and directly by satellites, freedom to tape and replay portions of the feed and low or no usage fees as the principal means to enable them to use the California Channel. (See also Chapter 8, "Additional Distribution.")

*Programming placement—the need for stable channel allocation and scheduling.* Cable operators recommended that the California Channel be given a secure home in time sharing situations. The California Channel should be placed on a cable channel which also carries other programming, not one which primarily transmits a character-generated feed. To avoid confusing and



frustrating viewers, the practice of shifting time schedules and channel assignments must be kept to a minimum by cable systems.

*The importance of covering local issues.* The California Channel is more likely to attract viewers if it covers some issues of local interest. To the extent technically and logistically possible, the California Channel should reflect the state's geographic and ethnic diversity by transmitting feeds of interest to specific regions and ethnic groups. Selected city council meetings of special statewide interest, for example, could be included when circumstances warrant.

*Emphasis on the California Channel's unique programming niche—a marketing challenge.* The California Channel would fill a unique programming niche, although its public affairs offerings would not draw as large an audience as broader-appeal cable channels. Its value, however, would lie in attracting a core audience of politically active viewers and opinion leaders. Non-cable subscribers who have heretofore not seen cable as satisfying their interest in public affairs issues are also potential viewers. The California Channel must, therefore, actively market and promote the network to attract viewers—existing cable subscribers as well as potential new subscribers.

*A technical delivery system accessible to cable.* Although channel capacity and programming are key issues facing cable operators when deciding to add the California Channel to their systems, accessibility of the satellite signal is also a factor. California Channel planners will need to select a satellite delivery system that can reach a majority of cable systems, either by transmitting to one of the cable "birds" or subsidizing cable systems' purchase of antennas to receive the signal from a less expensive satellite.

## NOTES

1. C-SPAN, which covers the U.S. House of Representatives, is carried by over 3,100 cable systems. C-SPAN II, which covers the U.S. Senate, is carried by 581 systems. Source: Paul Kagan Associates. "Cable Network Census: February 1989." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 131 (March 31, 1989): 10.  
The five states using cable to distribute gavel-to-gavel legislative proceedings are Oregon, Rhode Island, Nebraska, New York and Minnesota. In Massachusetts, public television carries the gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the House—channel 44, the UHF sister channel of WGBH channel 2. See Chapter 4.
2. The Kagan census for January 1989 shows nationwide subscription figures for SMATV at 669,000; STV at 109,000; and MMDS at 190,000. Figures for California alone would be substantially less. Source: Paul Kagan Associates. "Cable & Pay TV Census: Jan. 1989." *Cable TV Programming News Extra*, no. 129 (January 18, 1989): 2.
3. Although the *Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984* prohibits common carrier provision of video services in all markets except sparsely populated rural areas, the FCC has recently granted a waiver to GTE in Cerritos, California, to construct a cable system for Apollo Cablevision. This highly controversial action is being challenged by the cable industry. Source: Aversa, Jeannine. "FCC Allows CA Telco to Build Cable System." *Multichannel News* 9, no. 16 (April 18, 1988): 1.
4. Terranova, Joe. "Cable Penetration Climbs to 54.8%." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 8 (February 20, 1989): 1.
5. Paul Kagan Associates. "License Fee Conflicts." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 126 (October 27, 1988): 1.  
Paul Kagan Associates. "Channel Valuation Model." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 124 (August 29, 1988): 2.  
Paul Kagan Associates. "License Fees: The Strong Get Stronger." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 121 (May 19, 1988): 7.
6. "Facts & Figures: Cable System Retail Pricing Comparison." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 8 (February 20, 1989): 76.
7. Sources for discussion on the economic base of cable television:  
Vogel, Harold L. *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1986.  
Waterman, David. "Narrowcasting on Cable Television: An Economic Model." Unpublished paper, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 1987.  
Grillo, Jean B. "Basic Cable Advertising." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 15 (April 10, 1989): 47-65.
8. Cable penetration figures were provided by the California Cable Television Association, September 1988, and the 1989 *Television and Cable Factbook*.
9. Los Angeles ranks second in size among cable market areas, San Francisco-Sacramento sixth and San Diego eighteenth. Source: A. C. Nielsen Co., cited in *Multichannel News*, August 15, 1988, p. 46.
10. Paul Kagan Associates. *Cable TV Programming* (September 23, 1987): 1.

11. Two-thirds of California municipalities responded to the FCSCT survey, 342 out of a total of 441 cities and 58 counties. Survey data represent 539 franchises (several cities have more than one cable franchise). Source: Moore, Nina, and Kathleen T. Schuler. *Local Government and Cable Television: A Resource Directory for California*. San Francisco: Foundation for Community Service Cable Television, 1988.
12. If a cable system radiates television signals, the operator may have to keep a particular channel vacant, especially if it is the same frequency used by other radio operations, for example, the aircraft distress frequency. Source: Grob, Bernard. *Basic Television and Video Systems*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.
13. *Television and Cable Factbook*, No. 57. Washington, DC: Warren Publishing, 1989.
14. Here cable system size refers to number of subscribers, not to channel capacity.
15. Bob McRann, Senior Vice President, Cox Cable, San Diego, July 1987.
16. Susan Swain, Vice President for Corporate Communications, C-SPAN, April 1988.
17. For example, Bill Rosendahl, Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Century Cable of Santa Monica, May 1987.
18. *Cable Television Report and Order*, 36 F.C.C. 2d. 143, 170 (1972).
19. *Federal Communications Commission v. Midwest Video Corp. (Midwest Video II)*, 440 U.S. (1979).
20. Jamison, Frank R. "Cable Viewership Profile." In *1987 UNESCO World Communications Report*. Pre-publication draft, UNESCO, Paris, 1988.
21. 47 U.S.C. sec. 521 et. seq.
22. Jamison, see note above.
23. Allen McGlade, Vice President for Programming, Falcon Communications, July 1987.
24. Chicago. Office of Cable Communications. *Survey of Municipal Legislative Coverage*. Chicago, IL, 1988.
25. Possible exceptions are Torrance and Huntington Beach. Government access channels in both communities have been fully programmed, necessitating the activation of second channels.
26. Examples of educational access channel usage are provided by a FCSCT newsletter summary: "Cable and Education: Goodbye Ivory Tower." *CableScan* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 1-6.
27. These factors were listed by Gordon Herring of TeleCable Corp. at the National Cable Television Association Conference, Los Angeles, May 1988. Source: Paul Kagan Associates. "Cable: Hollywood's Alluring Frontier." *Cable TV Programming*, no. 121 (May 19, 1988): 3.
28. The statewide public opinion poll in the fall of 1987 on the concept of a California government affairs channel found that half of the respondents believe they are inadequately informed about state government, and three-fourths are interested in a new public affairs channel (Chapter 1).

A 1984 survey of Bay Area residents, conducted by Choosing Our Future, found that over two-thirds of respondents stated they want more informational programming, as opposed to entertainment fare—as much as one hour in three of prime time TV. Source: Choosing Our Future. *Communications Gap*. Menlo Park, CA: Choosing Our Future, 1984.

A nationwide public opinion poll conducted by Louis R. Harris in 1977 regarding individuals' interest in news program content as compared with media leaders' perceptions of the public's interest showed that 62% of interviewees were interested in state news, whereas media leaders thought that only 27% of the public would be interested. Poll cited in: Choosing Our Future. *Television and Democracy at the Crossroads*. Menlo Park, CA: Choosing Our Future, 1982.

29. Lamb, Brian, and the staff of C-SPAN. *C-SPAN: America's Town Hall*. Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988.  
Aversa, Jeannine. "C-SPAN Gaining Broader Appeal." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 2 (January 9, 1989): 25.
30. Attracting the "next 20%" was the theme of the 1988 National Cable Association Conference, held in Los Angeles.  
The cable penetration rate in the U.S. now approaches 55% of television households. Some California cable systems have exceeded 60% penetration—for example, Southwestern Cable of San Diego and Gill Cable of San Jose. Palm Springs and Santa Barbara exceed 80%.
31. "Awareness of and Attitudes Toward the San Diego City Council Meeting Cablecasts." Report prepared for the City of San Diego by CIC Research, San Diego, CA, 1987.
32. Aversa, p.25.
33. A model for geographically-tailored feeds is already provided by the radio service of the California Senate's Democratic caucus which distributes audio news releases relevant to regional interests. Source: Spencer Tyler, Communications Director, California Senate Majority Whip's Office, March 1988.

## **Chapter 8**

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# **Additional Distribution Paths for the California Channel**

The primary delivery mechanism proposed for the California Channel is a satellite feed to cable systems and from there to subscribers' homes. (See Chapter 7, "Cable Distribution.") To reach specialized audiences and those not wired for cable television requires the California Channel to take additional paths to viewers' television sets.

This chapter looks at several means to extend California Channel programming beyond cable viewers. It starts at the state Capitol by examining how the expert audience—legislators, their staffs, lobbyists and public interest groups—could use a multichannel closed-circuit video monitoring system to track legislative proceedings. An in-house television system would be programmed with the gavel-to-gavel feeds generated by video cameras in legislative chambers and committee rooms. The chapter next examines the importance of extending the California Channel feed to the news media. Broadcast television, radio and newspapers could excerpt portions of the California Channel to include in their news summaries, thereby increasing the media's coverage of legislative and other state government proceedings. The chapter concludes by looking at two groups of viewers who would benefit from direct satellite delivery of California



Channel programming—educational institutions and rural residents who are not served by cable systems.

## **A. Legislative Monitoring: Uses of the California Channel by Capitol Watchers**

Capitol watchers are persons who monitor the legislative process virtually full-time. Most are professionals whose livelihoods revolve around the Sacramento political scene—lobbyists and public interest groups who track legislation year-around, news reporters and political analysts and, of course, legislators and their staffs. Capitol watchers can also include individuals who are vitally concerned about certain bills but do not follow legislation on a regular basis.

### ***1. Video Monitoring for the Expert Audience: Legislators and Their Staffs***

In both the nation's Capitol and other states with gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative proceedings, by far the most avid viewing audience is comprised of legislators, their staffs, lobbyists, members of public interest groups and political reporters. Television sets in and around these seats of government are usually tuned to legislative channels from sign-on to sign-off.

For some legislative bodies, the initial rationale for installing cameras has been for internal monitoring. The U.S. House of Representatives first televised its proceedings for internal usage and to provide access to the press. C-SPAN was a subsequent development. Congress now maintains a 36-channel closed-circuit television system that allows legislators and their staffs to see C-SPAN, C-SPAN II, network affiliates, CNN and the Weather Channel. Parliaments in Canada and Australia operate even more extensive in-house video monitoring systems. A number of state legislatures also use television to monitor their own proceedings. The Oregon Legislature, for example, maintains an eleven-channel system which is viewed in and around the Capitol. (See Chapters 3, 4 and 5.)

These existing systems have proven to be instrumental in improving the productivity of all whose work is associated with the legislature, saving time as well as money. Televised proceedings save legislators, their staffs and the countless other individuals whose work is closely intertwined with the legislature many hours of waiting for specific proceedings to begin. In addition, they expand the scope of proceedings that these busy professionals can monitor. Legislators and staff members often work and listen at the same time, keeping one eye on paperwork and the other on key hearings of interest to them. State agency administrators with television sets in their offices are able to continue their work while waiting for testimony on agency-related bills to begin. Rather than sitting in committee rooms or chamber galleries while the agenda progresses, often for hours at a time, they can walk to the Capitol a few minutes prior to the discussion of agency legislation. Newspaper and broadcast news reporters are also avid users of legislative video monitoring services. Television sets are part of the furniture in capital news bureaus, enabling reporters to work on stories while monitoring legislative proceedings for fast-breaking developments.

Legislators derive additional benefits from video monitoring services when proceedings are taped. Videotapes represent perhaps the most accurate record of legislative proceedings, exceeding audiotapes and text transcripts in the amount of information available to anyone who researches the history of a bill to determine legislative intent. Videotaped proceedings capture not only the exact words spoken in debates and testimony but also the visual context which may include graphs and charts. Legislators reap an indirect benefit from videotaped proceedings by being able to evaluate their own performance.

Legislative video monitoring systems provide a further benefit to members of the public who visit the Capitol to witness the legislative process first-hand. Legislation which is particularly controversial often draws large numbers of interested individuals to the Capitol to present testimony and view the proceedings. Visitors frequently exceed the seating capacity of committee hearing rooms and chamber galleries. Video monitors which are wired into the closed-circuit television system can be installed in overflow seating areas, enabling visitors to see and hear the proceedings from nearby rooms.

A legislative video monitoring system for the California Legislature could be comprised simply of television sets tuned to the California Channel. A more elaborate service would contain separate channels for gavel-to-gavel feeds from each room installed with cameras, the video equivalent of the existing audio monitoring system (the "squawk box"). Text-based informational channels could be added to the line-up to provide announcements and up-to-date schedules of floor and committee proceedings. The Legislature's closed-circuit video system could be further enhanced by adding the local cable channels, allowing legislators and staff to readily monitor local, state, national and international news on network affiliate channels, CNN and C-SPAN.

## ***2. Reaching Capitol Watchers Outside the Sacramento Area***

Perhaps the California Channel's greatest boon will be for Capitol watchers throughout the state who live far from Sacramento, well beyond the reach of the "squawk box." Located in northern California 90 miles from the San Francisco metropolitan area, Sacramento is effectively isolated from a majority of the state's population. California, with the third largest land mass of any state in the nation and a span of 800 miles from north to south, presents a formidable challenge to anyone outside of Sacramento trying to follow the activities of the Legislature.

The California Channel could give Capitol watchers in outlying areas—members of public interest groups who do not maintain Sacramento offices as well as individuals who monitor legislation on a situational basis—direct access to legislative activities. The California Channel would place many in close touch with legislative proceedings for the first time. Education administrators monitoring school funding bills, health professionals following proposed changes in license requirements, small business owners with a stake in new tax proposals and day care providers affected by new standards are just a few who would benefit from watching the California Channel.

Even though the total number of Capitol watchers throughout the state, both professional and situational, may be small, their influence is far-reaching. They

are important links between the Legislature and citizens, and their work will be significantly enhanced by the California Channel.

### ***3. Enhancing the Feed for Capitol Watchers: Text Messages and Two-Way Communications***

To be a truly effective tool for Capitol watchers, whether located in Sacramento or in outlying parts of the state, the California Channel should be able to alert viewers of upcoming activities, notify them of schedule changes and provide in-depth information on bills under debate. This could be accomplished with extensive character-generated messages superimposed on the video picture. In addition, the California Channel or an independent organization could develop either a teletext component available to viewers with specially equipped television sets or a videotex service accessible via personal computers and modems.<sup>1</sup> A teletext or videotex service could offer more in-depth information to California Channel viewers—lengthy bill summaries, full texts of bills, lists of all legislation on particular topics and addresses and telephone numbers of legislators.

Another way to increase the value of the California Channel to Capitol watchers would be to add a two-way element to what is traditionally a one-way medium. By using a telephone teleconferencing system, televised committee hearings could invite audio testimony from individuals in outlying areas who are unable to travel to Sacramento. The California Channel could become a one-way video, two-way audio system capable of increasing the level of legislative participation by citizens of California. The state of Alaska, for example, has successfully used audio teleconferences for committee testimony for a number of years to bridge its formidable geographic barrier to legislative participation. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.")

## **B. Extending the California Channel to Other Media: Broadcasters and the Press**

Although cable television would serve as the primary distribution system for the California Channel, cable does not reach all of California's television households. The California Channel has the potential to reach a much larger audience by allowing television and radio reporters to excerpt portions of the feed to include in their news stories and encouraging print reporters to develop stories from California Channel coverage.

### ***1. Commercial Broadcast Television***

California has over 60 commercial television stations. Yet they provide minimal coverage of legislative news, as evidenced by this study's media analysis. (See Chapter 2, "Media Neglect.") Although 10 California television stations used to have Sacramento news bureaus, no non-Sacramento television stations currently maintain a capital office.

Station managers cite the expense of staffing Sacramento bureaus and of sending crews to the capital, plus lack of viewer interest, as reasons for limited legislative news coverage. When they do cover Sacramento news, stations get their stories in one of three ways. They send a crew to the capital; they obtain the

story from a network affiliate located in Sacramento; or they buy a feed from a Sacramento-based news service.

In other states where gavel-to-gavel feeds are available—Rhode Island and Massachusetts, for example—commercial broadcasters have an additional source of legislative coverage. They obtain clips directly from the gavel-to-gavel feeds and insert them into their news programs. Gavel-to-gavel programming by C-SPAN of the U.S. Congress and by the CBC of the Canadian Parliament is used for the same purpose. Segments of these feeds regularly make their way onto network news broadcasts in both countries.

The California Channel could offer a similar legislative news service for broadcasters. To ascertain potential interest, California Channel project staff interviewed 19 representatives of public and commercial television stations. Their responses ranged from “very interested” . . . to “not at all” . . . to “it depends.” A straw poll shows that most would use the feed, at least on occasion. Criteria for use would depend on low cost, high production quality, relevance to the local market and ease of access.

Television news reporters’ responses differed appreciably from station managers. Managers keep an eye on the ratings and have become convinced, for the most part, that viewers are not concerned with what happens in state government. Reporters, however, believe that viewers are indeed interested. They cite a classic chicken and egg dilemma as both the reason for viewers’ seeming disinterest in state government as well as the rationale for increasing legislative coverage. What comes first: viewers’ disinterest in legislative news or the media’s unwillingness to cover it? Some argue that because of limited coverage, viewers’ interest in state issues has not been primed. When legislative news is aired, it lacks significance and does not appeal to viewers. Ratings are low, and station managers subsequently air less legislative news. Reporters contend that breaking this vicious cycle through increased coverage would, in effect, prime the pump. In time, viewers’ interest *would* increase.

Until recently, KRON-TV in San Francisco was the only non-Sacramento television station to maintain a capital news bureau. In October, 1988, it followed the precedent set by other California television news organizations by closing its Sacramento bureau and dismissing its political correspondents. Until that time, however, KRON had taken an active pump-priming approach to state political coverage. Former Field Producer Don Fields, interviewed prior to the closing of the bureau, stated, “Our station has shown that interest in state government does exist. We operate under the assumption that people can’t make political decisions unless they have information. We run stories from Sacramento at least three nights every week.”

Reporters differ over which programming format would be of most use to them. Regarding gavel-to-gavel coverage, Linda Douglass of KNBC-TV in Los Angeles said, “If I had raw footage, I could piece it together with other stories. There are many days I could use 30 seconds of footage from Sacramento.” Others cited potential difficulties in relying on gavel-to-gavel feeds. A reporter might not understand the context of the debate from the raw footage alone. Some stated they might have difficulty “voicing over” footage obtained from Sacramento because



they lack sufficient information to comment on the story. The lack of a reliable legislative schedule is also a problem. While the availability of the California Channel would alleviate hours spent at the Capitol waiting for action to begin, the problem of not knowing the schedule would still exist. Several reporters preferred a news analysis format and suggested that a daily analysis and summary of key debates and votes would be a useful service.

Although reporters are interested in using the California Channel feed, they are concerned that the press corps would be excluded from legislative chambers once the new service becomes operational. Said Steve Swatt of KCRA, "I want to be able to maintain my freedom and talk with whomever I want and cover whatever I want."

Station managers were somewhat less interested in the California Channel than reporters. They indicated they would use it occasionally, however, especially for coverage of legislative proceedings relevant to the local market or for fast-breaking controversial events. They emphasized a need for high quality programming. Some indicated a willingness to pay for the service on a one-time-only basis, depending on the type of footage offered and, of course, the cost.

## **2. *Public Television***

From 1980 to 1983, California public television stations aired a weekly reporters' roundtable on legislative issues called "California Week in Review." It was replaced by a documentary format program on state public affairs topics shortly before state funding of public television programming was cut altogether. Currently none of California's 13 public television stations produces programming which focuses on legislative and other state government issues, although stations in Los Angeles (KCET) and San Francisco (KQED) air public affairs programs which occasionally cover legislative issues. (See Chapter 1, "Need.")

Representatives of public television stations interviewed for the California Channel project indicated interest in acquiring programming to fill the gap in their coverage of legislative issues. They would be more interested in a weekly legislative news program than extensive gavel-to-gavel coverage. Ed Moreno, KCET's Vice President for Community Services in Los Angeles, stated there is a need for in-depth analysis of legislative issues. He believes "meaty coverage" would have more audience appeal than gavel-to-gavel coverage. Other public television station representatives stated that any California Channel programming they would acquire must be well-produced, of interest to the local market and not prohibitively expensive.

## **3. *Radio***

Although radio was not a focus of the California Channel study, several media representatives interviewed for this report stressed the importance of making the California Channel accessible to radio as a means of reaching even more Californians. There are currently three radio bureaus in the capital which provide news reporting services to stations in the major metropolitan areas. In



addition, the party caucuses of the Assembly and Senate have a long tradition of providing audio feeds to radio stations throughout the state.

The California Channel could offer another source of legislative news to radio stations, enabling them to monitor legislative activity directly. It would be especially useful for stations in outlying areas of the state not served by the bureaus, particularly when they want to follow issues of local significance.

#### 4. Newspapers

Print journalists also view the California Channel as a potential tool for monitoring the Legislature. The state's major newspapers maintain Sacramento bureaus. In fact, in contrast to the decrease in television bureaus in the capital in recent years, the number of newspaper bureaus and print reporters has increased.

Newspaper reporters rely on the "squawk box" to follow legislative proceedings. This multichannel audio system, operated by the Legislature, monitors both chambers and more than a dozen committee rooms. Some bureaus tune in to several audio units, enabling reporters to monitor various hearings and floor debates at once.

Reporters indicated that the California Channel would provide the visual impact of a story without them actually having to be at the Capitol. It would free them from spending long days sitting in committee hearings and would give them the ability to cover more stories simultaneously.

Print journalists echoed television news reporters by stating that lack of adherence to schedules presents a nightmare for anyone trying to cover the Legislature. Bill Endicott, Capitol Bureau Chief of the *Sacramento Bee*, believes there is a lot that reporters do not cover because of unpredictable scheduling. As a result, the more tightly scheduled press conferences are covered more readily than committee and floor proceedings. Although a California Channel would not solve the scheduling problem, Endicott believes it would free reporters from "just sitting there and listening to proceedings. They could watch them on the monitor instead."

Reporters also commented that many smaller papers which cannot afford to send reporters to Sacramento would benefit from California Channel coverage. With a television monitor in the newsroom, they would have access to legislative proceedings that had previously gone unreported.

Most newspaper reporters prefer gavel-to-gavel coverage over legislative analysis. *Their* job, they stressed, is to provide analysis, and the California Channel feed would give them an important source of information.

In summary, the traditional media represent a powerful way to increase coverage of legislative and other state government proceedings. Media representatives interviewed for the California Channel project view the new public affairs network as a potentially valuable tool to improve their coverage of Sacramento.

### **C. Direct Satellite Access by Educational Institutions**

Several schools and colleges in California operate educational access channels to distribute instructional programs on local cable systems. (See Chapter 7, "Cable Distribution.") Satellite-based distance learning services are proliferating and represent another means of transmitting educational programs. They offer a broad array of curriculum instruction for students as well as training opportunities for teachers and administrators. Consequently, the presence of satellite dishes on California college campuses and school grounds is now commonplace. Direct delivery of California Channel programming to interested schools and universities via satellite represents an effective means to reach students at all educational levels with "training in democracy."<sup>2</sup>

California educational institutions can obtain satellite-fed instructional programs from a number of sources, both within their school and university systems and from outside providers. The Educational Telecommunications Network (ETN) of the Los Angeles County Office of Education is an example of locally-produced satellite-delivered programming for K-12 public school systems. It transmits training programs on curriculum reform to public school teachers and administrators in 58 school districts in the Los Angeles area as well as other county offices throughout the state which have the requisite satellite antenna equipment.<sup>3</sup> Additional satellite-delivered sources of curriculum packages available to schools and colleges include the TI-IN network of Texas, Oklahoma State University's Arts and Sciences Teleconferencing Service and the National Technological University.

The California State University (CSU) system is another active proponent and user of satellites for distance learning. The 19 campuses of the California State University system and the Chancellor's office are equipped with combination C/Ku-band antennas which they use for a variety of educational applications. The CSU system maintains a mobile unit capable of remote site satellite transmission. CSU-Chico, noted for its pioneering work in distance learning, operates a C-band uplink to transmit both instructional programs and teleconferences.<sup>4</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, educators are enthusiastic about bringing legislative proceedings into the classroom via the California Channel. Many school systems are not wired for cable, and most California cable systems do not have access channels dedicated to educational uses. Educators interviewed for the California Channel project recommended that schools be able to acquire the feed by both cable television and directly from the satellite transmission. They stressed the importance of transmitting an unscrambled feed at low or no cost to encourage use by schools and colleges. Educators also suggested that they be free to tape and replay portions of the feed without penalty in order to more flexibly match the proceedings with their curricula.

### **D. The Importance of Satellite Delivery for Rural Residents**

Cable television originated in the early 1950s as a means to extend television programming to rural residents outside the reach of broadcast signals. Consequently, many of the nation's oldest cable systems, the "classic" systems, are in rural communities.

California's rural residents, although small in number compared to its city dwellers, raise unique issues regarding the delivery of California Channel programming. California is one of the most urbanized states in the nation, with 95% of its population residing in densely populated metropolitan areas. The contrast between California's least and most densely populated counties is marked—from 1.6 residents per square mile in Alpine County to nearly 16,000 residents per square mile in San Francisco County.<sup>5</sup>

Two characteristics of rural cable systems present challenges to the California Channel. First, many are small systems, often with only 12 to 24 channels available to subscribers. Few would have sufficient shelf space to add the California Channel. Second, rural cable systems in sparsely populated areas rarely extend to households located at a distance from city boundaries. Service to rural residents outside of city boundaries often entails stringing miles of cable to farm and ranch houses separated from each other by thousands of acres of farmlands, forests or mountains. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most sparsely populated rural areas outside of city boundaries remain largely uncabled.<sup>6</sup>

The rural alternative to cable television is direct-to-home satellite delivery of television programming. Satellite dishes are a common sight in small towns and at farm and ranch houses. Many rural residents use dishes to pick up additional channels not available on local cable systems. For those who live beyond the reach of cable systems, satellite antennas are the only source of television outside of nearby broadcast stations. Many home dish operators have become self-taught experts in satellite technology, learning how satellites work, where cable "birds" are located above the equator and what programming is available on each.

Scrambling is a major issue for rural residents who rely on satellite antennas to receive non-local television programming. As a result, home dish activists have become a vocal lobbying force in Washington, D.C. They are working to retain their ability to obtain television programming at a reasonable price as the cable networks move to scramble satellite feeds and charge a fee for access.

The proposed California Channel is a television service for urban and rural residents alike. As discussed in the previous chapter, cable systems would be the primary distributor of California Channel programming, obtaining the feed via satellite transmission. Although cable systems currently reach half of California's television households and are rapidly expanding their reach, new growth initiatives are aimed primarily at the more densely populated urban areas.<sup>7</sup> It is, therefore, important that the California Channel be transmitted as an unscrambled feed to ensure access by rural residents whose only source of non-local television programming is satellite antennas.

Furthermore, the California Channel must actively market its public affairs programming fare to rural residents. With agriculture, lumbering, small business, water resources and environmental quality bills on the legislative agenda virtually every day of the session, rural residents have just as much at stake in being aware of legislative proceedings as the more populous urban dwellers.

## E. Conclusions

Once launched, the California Channel will reach far beyond cable subscribers' homes. Specialized audiences of the California Channel will use a variety of transmission media to acquire its programming. The distribution diagram in the previous chapter underscores the multipurpose, multimedia nature of the California Channel (Table 7.1).

At the source of the California Channel's transmission, the state Capitol, legislators and staff would be able to monitor their own proceedings on a multichannel closed-circuit television system. Lobbyists and members of public interest groups—plugged into the Capitol's video monitoring system, cable systems or the direct satellite feed—would rely on the California Channel to track current legislation and keep their members informed. Broadcast and print media would use segments of the feed to enhance their own legislative coverage, augmenting the number of Californians who are informed of legislative proceedings. Educational institutions would bring the California Channel into the classroom by satellite or cable to introduce students to the legislative process. And rural residents beyond the reach of cable systems would use home satellite dishes to pick up the California Channel signal.

The key considerations for reaching these specialized audiences are as follows:

*An in-house video monitoring system for the Legislature.* The California Channel offers legislators and staff members a highly convenient means to monitor legislative proceedings. The video signals originated in the Legislature can be developed into a multichannel closed-circuit television system with gavel-to-gavel feeds of house chambers, committee rooms and press conference facilities. Such a video monitoring system would offer a powerful tool to support the work of legislators and their staffs. California Channel planners must work closely with legislative leaders to design a system with the dual capabilities of serving as an in-house video monitoring system as well as a statewide public affairs channel.

*Usage by Capitol watchers.* The California Channel would provide a new set of eyes and ears for Capitol watchers in Sacramento and around the state. These audiences include members of public interest groups, lobbyists and other individuals and organizations that monitor legislation affecting their professional and personal interests. Extensive use of on-screen character-generated information, or a more elaborate teletext service which provides detailed schedule and bill information, would be a boon to persons who track legislation. The addition of a two-way audio teleconferencing feature for key committee hearings would open the legislative process to a far greater number of Californians than can currently travel to Sacramento to deliver testimony.

*Extending the California Channel to other media.* Most Americans rely on broadcast television for their news. If commercial broadcasters are allowed to insert portions of the California Channel feed into their regularly-scheduled television news programs, then a significantly larger portion of the California public will be informed of legislative issues than are reached by cable television

alone. The California Channel must format its service to make it easily accessible to television news organizations. Radio stations and daily newspapers are also vitally important outlets for California Channel programming and must be factored into its delivery system.

*The importance of direct satellite delivery for educational institutions and rural residents.* Educators have indicated a strong interest in using the California Channel in the classroom. (See Chapter 7.) Although many schools and colleges obtain educational programming by cable television, far more rely on satellite antennas to receive a wide variety of instructional programs. Therefore, the provision of an unscrambled satellite feed is vital to the successful use of the California Channel for educational purposes. Educators recommend that they be allowed to tape and replay portions of the feed at low or no cost to accommodate class schedules.

Not all of California's sparsely populated rural areas are wired for cable television. As a result, satellite dishes are commonly used by rural residents to obtain a variety of television programming. In order to reach rural residents who do not have access to cable television or whose cable systems do not have sufficient channel capacity to carry the new public affairs television channel, the California Channel must provide an unscrambled signal accessible to satellite dish users. It should also make a concerted marketing effort to increase rural residents' awareness of its programming.



## NOTES

1. A teletext service was suggested by Legi-Tech, a Sacramento firm which provides a computer-based legislative monitoring service to subscribers. Sheryl Bell, David Lee and Ken Mandler, June 1987.
2. The phrase, "training in democracy," is borrowed from a description of how C-SPAN is used in the classroom by college professors, *C-SPAN Update*, February 6, 1989, p. 7.
3. Interview with Patricia Cabrera, Executive Producer, Educational Telecommunications Network, Downey, CA, February 1989.
4. Leveille, David E. "Communication Technologies in the California State University." *TeleConference* 6, no. 1 (January/February 1987): 24-31.  
Also, telephone interviews with Dr. David Leveille, Dir. of Institutional Operations, California State University, Long Beach, CA, November 1987; and Dr. Charles Urbanowicz, Assoc. Dean for Regional and Continuing Education, Chico State University, August 1987.  
In all, 14 of the California State University campuses operate microwave-based ITFS systems (instructional television fixed service). Courses and training programs reach students at their homes, businesses and government offices via standard television sets. Many ITFS systems are able to combine satellite and microwave signals by taking satellite feeds and transmitting them over the ITFS system and vice-versa.
5. Fay, James S., Anne G. Lipow, and Stephanie W. Fay, eds. *California Almanac: 1986-1987 Edition*. Novato, CA: Pacific Data Resources, 1987.
6. Interview with Jim Weir, Nevada County Board of Supervisors, Nevada City, CA, February 1989.
7. Industry growth figures indicate that the phenomenal increase in cable penetration in recent years has occurred primarily in the most densely populated urban areas of the country.  
Source: Terranova, Joe. "Cable Penetration Climbs to 54.8%." *Multichannel News* 10, no. 8 (February 20, 1989): 1.

## **Chapter 9**

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# **Technical and Budget Requirements**

To the television engineers and legislative planners who design the Capitol's video system, the desired result is much the same—a sharp, color-balanced image, well framed on the television screen and pleasing to the eye and ear. The steps taken to achieve that result differ for both groups, however. Television engineers are concerned with lighting levels, lens settings, lengths of cable runs and control room operations; legislative planners with the creation of policies and operating procedures that honor legislative protocols, present unbiased coverage, avoid unflattering images and preserve the architectural integrity of the Capitol.

While the technical systems may seem complex, they are relatively straightforward in design and operation. A variety of video systems has been installed and operated successfully in legislative chambers of city, state and national governments throughout the world. Policy considerations, on the other hand, are unique to each legislative body. They—not the technical features themselves—are the primary determinants of video system design. Before a video system can be installed in the California Legislature and made available to the public via the proposed public affairs television channel, both legislative and California Channel planners must determine the policies and operating assumptions upon which specific technical systems designs will be based.

As discussed in Chapters 10 and 11, this study recommends a dual approach to funding and administering a public affairs television channel—an internal/external distribution model similar to C-SPAN. The Legislature would install and maintain a video system in the Capitol in order to televise the proceedings of house chambers, committee hearings and press conferences. The various video signals could also be routed to Capitol offices and serve as an in-house monitoring system. The California Channel, a nonprofit organization, would transmit the gavel-to-gavel proceedings plus other programs which it produces via satellite. Programming would in turn be delivered to the public primarily by participating cable systems with satellite dishes capable of receiving the signal. The Legislature and the California Channel would each be responsible for their own funding and administration.

Although the specific design of a legislative video system will be determined by an internal planning process, components of a typical gavel-to-gavel legislative operation include:

- fixed remote-control cameras located in the Assembly and Senate chambers, selected committee rooms and the press conference room;
- control facilities to operate the video system, including remote-control drives, camera switchers, video monitors, an audio system and signal router;
- field production equipment to televise proceedings in rooms without fixed remote-control camera installations;
- an in-house closed-circuit monitoring system which takes signals from the various proceedings and sends them to monitors located in the Capitol; and
- an optional video archive facility to record and store proceedings for future use by legislative researchers, public policy analysts and historians.

The California Channel would operate the video and satellite transmission systems necessary to receive the gavel-to-gavel feeds from the Capitol, produce its own programming and transmit a daily feed via satellite to California cable systems. Its operation, located in a separate facility near the Capitol, would consist of:

- a microwave or fiberoptic link from the Capitol to California Channel headquarters;
- a master control facility for receiving, taping and transmitting programming via satellite;
- a studio to produce newscasts, interview and call-in shows and other programs;
- satellite transmission capability—the uplink to send the signal to a satellite and the lease of the satellite transponder itself; and
- as the operation expands, field production equipment for live and tape-delayed coverage of events outside the reach of camera installations in the Capitol and the California Channel's studio.

The complexity and costs of legislative and California Channel video operations depend upon several factors: the number of legislative chambers and committee rooms installed with fixed cameras, the amount of programming produced to supplement gavel-to-gavel coverage, the number of hours of programming transmitted each day and the specific technical features and costs of the satellite system itself. These factors cannot be determined until both the Legislature and the California Channel participate in extensive planning processes and conduct the engineering studies necessary to design the technical systems.

Rapid changes in video technology and equipment costs, as well as the changing value of the dollar against foreign currency, make cost projection an imprecise endeavor at best. System configurations and cost projections are provided solely for the purpose of indicating the general magnitude of a California Channel project.

## **A. The Legislature's Video System**

Debates on Assembly and Senate floors, testimony presented at committee hearings, press conferences, budget addresses and opening and closing legislative ceremonies—all are potential sources of programming for the proposed state public affairs television channel, captured by cameras installed in the Capitol. This chapter describes the basic building blocks of a typical legislative television operation based on gavel-to-gavel coverage and indicates the estimated cost ranges for the hardware and annual operations. (Definitions of technical terms are provided in the Glossary, Appendix H.)

### ***1. Policy Considerations for Legislative Video System***

The first step in designing a legislative television system is to determine the policies that in turn shape the technical requirements of the system. While the underlying operating assumptions are best developed in a comprehensive planning process conducted by legislators, staff and technical advisors, the following considerations are common to the development of gavel-to-gavel legislative television systems:

*Minimum impact on legislative process.* Ideally, the presence of cameras in legislative chambers and committee rooms should not affect the way business is conducted on the floor. With the appropriate equipment selection, a video system need have only minimal visual and procedural impact on legislative proceedings, no greater than a reporter sitting in the gallery and quietly taking notes.

In legislative video operations throughout the world, remote-control cameras have been installed as a means to record legislative proceedings with minimal intrusion into the legislative process. Instead of camera operators located on the floor, technicians operate the remote-control drives that enable the cameras to pan, tilt, zoom and focus from a control room physically removed from legislative chambers. Cameras are usually mounted on chamber walls or installed in recesses, providing far less visual and physical intrusion than cameras operated from the floor. The camera motions themselves are virtually silent.

Remote-control systems offer the further advantage of limiting the number of staff required to operate cameras and control facilities, an important budget consideration for ongoing operations. In a manual operation, a legislative chamber with six cameras may require six or more operators on the floor depending on the placement of the cameras, as well as a crew of two to four technicians in the control room. In contrast, a six-camera chamber equipped with a remote-control system can be televised with as few as three technicians located in the control room.

*Adherence to legislative protocols.* The rules of order determine the rules of television coverage. The following guidelines are common to a number of legislative bodies which operate gavel-to-gavel video systems. (See Chapters 3, 4 and 5.)

Most legislative bodies require the video system to record only the person recognized by the speaker of the house, the president of the senate or the chair of the committee. Most allow only head-and-shoulders shots of the legislator who has the floor. Reaction shots, cutaways to unrecognized floor action and panning the chamber are generally prohibited except under special circumstances such as ceremonial events. Some legislative bodies permit split screen shots of two legislators in debate or a committee member questioning a witness, especially if the discussion involves relatively brief and repeated exchanges between the two individuals. Legislative bodies also specify the format and content of titles superimposed on the lower third of the screen—usually the member's name, party affiliation and district. Before opening television coverage to the public, the Legislature may want to test the video system and refine its rules of operation with a short-term pilot project.

*Maintenance of a comfortable work environment.* In the past, the presence of television cameras in legislative chambers has usually been accompanied by hot and glaring lights. Modern cameras are now available that provide acceptable photography in most room lighting conditions, resulting in a far more comfortable work environment for legislators than video systems installed even in relatively recent years. Although some boost lighting might produce more flattering video images, it is not necessary in room lighting situations adequate for normal human vision.

*Historic preservation.* The need to preserve the architectural integrity of the Capitol is a key factor in designing a legislative television system. Aesthetic considerations will play a major role in determining the location of cameras, the design of supplemental lighting systems, if any, the construction of control facilities and the placement of a microwave or satellite antenna on the roof.

*Professional quality production.* Television viewers are keenly aware of the quality of production of public affairs programming. Amateurish production and poor quality image do not fit viewers' expectations of television and will not be watched. Therefore, the system configurations and cost estimates outlined in this chapter are based on broadcast quality camera equipment, remote-control drives that meet the requirements of legislative coverage, a one-half inch professional-standard tape format and control room equipment capable of producing broadcast quality programming.<sup>1</sup>



*Flexible system design and redundancy features.* A legislative television operation which strives for broadcast quality coverage must have enough redundancy built into its video system to provide continuous coverage if cameras or control room equipment malfunction. One means of providing continuous coverage is to install a back-up camera in each chamber, capable of capturing a "safe shot" of the entire chamber if one or more of the other cameras malfunctions. Another safeguard is to equip the chambers and control rooms with identical systems. If one control facility malfunctions, then another can be substituted to ensure that the highest priority proceedings continue to be televised. A further advantage of installing identical equipment throughout the Capitol is to enable video technicians to quickly and comfortably switch from one control facility to another. If the legislative body adopts the video coverage as an official record of proceedings, there must also be sufficient back-up and overlap in its recording units to ensure continuity of coverage.

*Maximizing use for internal operations: a closed-circuit monitoring system.* A video system is a major investment for a legislative body. Although the primary reason for televising the Legislature is to open the proceedings to the public, secondary benefits can be obtained from the presence of cameras in chambers and committee rooms. Video signals from each of the rooms installed with cameras can be routed to a closed-circuit television monitoring system available to legislators, legislative staff and the governor's office within the Capitol. The system can also be extended to nearby office buildings in the Capitol complex in order to reach executive branch agencies, the press and lobbyists.

Existing closed-circuit legislative video systems have proven to be effective time-savers for all who monitor legislative proceedings by allowing office work to be accomplished while following the progress of floor or committee proceedings at the same time. A video monitoring system can also extend legislative proceedings to overflow areas when seating in committee rooms and galleries cannot accommodate the large numbers of visitors that sometimes crowd the Capitol for particularly controversial proceedings.

*Gavel-to-gavel coverage as the "camera of record."* Another ancillary benefit of gavel-to-gavel television coverage is the ability to establish a videotape archive of legislative proceedings. Videotape records provide legislative researchers, public policy analysts, historians and public interest groups with an accurate record of the content and context of legislative proceedings. An archival video record would supplement the *Daily Journal* which summarizes Assembly and Senate floor actions but does not include complete transcripts of proceedings. Legislative policy considerations related to the development of a videotape archive include tape retention guidelines, copying procedures and whether or not video recordings would be considered official records.

*Extended capabilities of an in-house studio.* Although the installation of a legislative television studio can be considered a separate issue from gavel-to-gavel coverage, the presence of a video system in the Capitol opens the door to other applications. In some states, legislative media services departments operate studios which legislators use to create video news releases and electronic newsletters. The implementation of a studio facility would depend on legislative policies and usage guidelines. Legislative leaders would need to determine

whether or not a studio would be operated on a partisan basis (like New York) or non-partisan basis (like Minnesota), and if it would serve one or both houses. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.")

*System longevity and cost considerations.* Unlike commercial facilities, major video installations in public-funded institutions are generally not budgeted to replace equipment every few years to keep abreast of changes in technology. This report assumes an equipment longevity of five to 10 years. Inherent in this assumption is the purchase of state-of-the-art, high quality and long-lasting equipment. Although initial capital costs are substantial, the ongoing costs related to maintenance, parts and the associated personnel expenses can be expected to offset the up-front equipment purchase.

## ***2. Technical Components of the Legislature's Video System***

A full-scale legislative gavel-to-gavel video operation would consist of remote-control cameras in the chambers and committee rooms, operated by technicians from a control facility within the Capitol. Portable field production equipment would enable proceedings to be televised from rooms not equipped with permanent camera installations. The Legislature may also want to install a closed-circuit video monitoring system composed of the feeds emanating from the various camera installations in the Capitol. Optional considerations for a legislative video system include a videotape archive facility and a studio.

### ***a. Cameras and Control Equipment***

Remote-control equipment and cameras able to operate in relatively low light situations are part of the rapid advances which have taken place in video technology in the past decade. Microprocessor controls, both within the camera itself and in control room equipment, have increased the sophistication of television operations and reduced camera maintenance requirements.

Remote drives which direct cameras to pan, tilt, zoom and focus can be operated from a control room at a distance from the action without the intrusion of camera operators on the floor. In legislative applications, pre-set seating positions are programmed into the system and cameras quickly and automatically trained on the person speaking once he or she has been recognized by the officiating legislator and the appropriate microphone has been activated. Stored text messages like legislator's name, party affiliation and district can be automatically superimposed ("supered") on the video image.

A full-scale video system envisioned by this study would encompass the Assembly and Senate chambers, the two main committee rooms (Assembly room 4202 and Senate room 4203) and the governor's press conference room. Portable field production equipment would allow coverage from other locations within the Capitol.

Five to six wall-mounted remote-control cameras in each of the chambers and three to four remote-control cameras in the committee rooms would be operated from a control room. Its ideal location would be room 1200 in the Capitol basement, the nexus of the Legislature's existing audio and video wiring. If space is limited in room 1200, a control facility would need to be installed elsewhere in

the Capitol, as close to the chambers as possible to minimize the length of cable runs.

The control facility would contain the remote-control systems that operate the camera positions and settings. Additional control room equipment would include video monitors, camera switchers, audio control units and signal routers. Because the Senate and Assembly often meet simultaneously, they would not be able to share control equipment. The Assembly chamber and its main committee room would operate from one set of control equipment, and the Senate chamber and its main committee room from a separate set. Committees and floor sessions of the same house generally do not meet at the same time, however, and could share control equipment.

If the governor's press conference room were a part of the video system, it, too, would operate from its own control facility. Press conferences can occur several times a day and are often held when the houses or committees are in session. A separate control facility for the press conference room would be necessary to ensure coverage of these events.

If two or more control facilities were required for the Legislature's video installation, they would not necessarily need to be housed in separate rooms within the Capitol. Given adequate space in a centrally-located room, the control facilities could be installed adjacent to each other, separated by sound-proof partitions.

The Legislature may want to extend the range of its camera installation by operating one or more electronic field production (EFP) units. A two-camera EFP unit run manually by camera operators would provide live coverage from sites within the Capitol not reached by the fixed remote-control cameras. For proceedings which would not be transmitted live, a one-camera portable electronic news-gathering (ENG) unit could tape events from locations not wired into the video system.<sup>2</sup>

Although audio and lighting systems are both key components of any video operation, they are not treated in depth in this study. An extensive audio system and color-balanced lighting were installed during the Capitol restoration, completed in 1982. The adequacy of these systems for a new video installation would need to be determined by an engineering study.

### ***b. Closed-Circuit Video Monitoring System***

An obvious benefit of installing video equipment in the Capitol is to transmit the signals of the televised proceedings into a multichannel closed-circuit system, with television monitors located in Capitol offices and, perhaps, nearby buildings in the Capitol complex. The Legislature could also install large-screen monitors throughout the Capitol, such as committee rooms used for gallery overflow seating as well as the rotunda and other public areas where visitors often gather.

A simple multichannel system could devote one channel to Assembly floor and committee proceedings, another to Senate proceedings, a third to press conferences, and a fourth to a text "crawl" which indicates up-to-date schedules of hearings, debates, meetings and press conferences. Internally-generated

channels could conceivably be added to the Capitol's Sacramento Cablevision hook-up, installed in early 1989. Once the Legislature's video system is installed, the cost to add channels to the Capitol's existing cable system may be relatively minor. The Legislature may also want to add the audio-only channels of the existing "squawk box" system to unused channels on the closed-circuit video system so all chambers, both those with camera installations and those which are monitored only with audio equipment, can be accessed from a single device.

Models for closed-circuit monitoring systems include the 36-channel system in the nation's Capitol which carries C-SPAN, C-SPAN II, local broadcast channels and cable networks; the 11-channel system of Oregon's Legislative Media Service; and the Canadian Parliament's 75-channel local area network. All are described in preceding chapters.

### ***c. Other Considerations for Legislative Video Operations***

*Video archive.* Televised gavel-to-gavel coverage presents the Legislature with the opportunity to use the system as a "camera of record" in order to establish a videotape archive of legislative proceedings. To ensure uninterrupted coverage, the archive's recording system would require multiple taping units for backup and overlap. Other requirements for a video archive include tape duplicating equipment, a constant temperature storage vault and shelving. If a dubbing service were offered, additional staff would be needed to operate copying equipment. The Legislature may want a video archive service to be operated on contract by another agency such as the State Library or the Law Library.

*Studio.* In recent years, members of both the Assembly and Senate have explored the use of the television medium to communicate more directly with their constituents. Videotapes which highlight legislative issues have been produced irregularly on a contract basis, primarily for release to cable systems in legislators' districts.<sup>3</sup> When cameras are installed in the Capitol, the Legislature may consider expanding its own video operation beyond the transmission of gavel-to-gavel feeds. Installation of a studio with recording and editing capabilities would enable legislators to prepare video productions on a more regular basis—for example, electronic newsletters and video news releases—similar to services in Minnesota and New York. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.") A basic studio would be equipped with three cameras, an audio system, control equipment, recording and editing units, lighting, backdrops and other furnishings.

### ***d. Existing Capitol Wiring: The Potential for an Interim Video Installation***

When the Capitol was restored in 1982, a state-of-the-art public address system was installed in both chambers and all committee rooms. Color-balanced lighting, appropriate for television cameras, was also added. A network of conduit and cable (Belden 8281 coaxial cable) was laid to extend audio, video and intercom jacks into both chambers, several committee rooms and the governor's press conference room. Television station camera crews can connect their equipment to jacks in any of these rooms and send their signals via patch panels in room 1200 to an outlet box on the southwest corner of the Capitol grounds. Mobile production



vans which are plugged into the outlet can tape feeds for use in later programs. With transportable microwave or satellite equipment, they can also transmit live feeds from the Capitol.<sup>4</sup>

A multichannel audio system, called the “squawk box,” allows listeners to monitor the activities of chambers and committee rooms. All audio signals of this 15-channel radio system, operated by the Capitol’s electronics shop, are fed to room 1200 and from there are broadcast to the building and area surrounding the Capitol.

The existing coaxial cable in the Capitol would not support a remote-control camera installation which requires triaxial or multicore cable. However, the Legislature may want to explore the feasibility of conducting a pilot project using existing wiring to assess the operation of a legislative television system. (The United States Senate, for example, conducted a pilot project before it opened televised proceedings to broadcasters and the public via C-SPAN II.) Depending on the findings of an in-depth study of existing wiring, it may be conceivable to televise proceedings on a temporary basis with manually-operated cameras located on the floor and a basic control room installed in the Capitol. Because of logistic and aesthetic considerations, as well as the long-term cost of staffing a manual operation, this option should not be considered a permanent video installation, however. The space consumed by tripod-mounted cameras, the web of cables laid on the floor and the presence of camera operators in the chambers would no doubt have some disruptive effect on the legislative process, especially in a full-time legislative body that meets much of the year.

### ***3. Legislative Video System Costs***

Video system design often involves a tradeoff between capital and operating costs. Lower quality and less expensive systems generally require higher ongoing personnel and maintenance costs. Higher quality systems, especially those equipped with automated features, can enhance personnel productivity. They also last longer. This study advocates the installation of a legislative video system which will operate for at least 10 years. Although the up-front capital costs for such a long-term investment are substantial, the ongoing operating costs are generally more easily controlled.

*Equipment costs.* Cost estimates for legislative technical systems are cautiously projected for a range of operations. Caution is predicated on three unknowns. First, system design will be determined by the Legislature’s own planning process, followed by an engineering study. A comprehensive engineering study of the Capitol is estimated to cost at least \$100,000 depending on the number of chambers and committee rooms under consideration. The engineering study would identify historic preservation concerns, lighting levels, control room location, lengths of cable runs from the chambers to control facilities, existing audio capabilities relative to a video installation, remodeling and construction needs and other factors necessary to propose the design and cost of the video system.



Second, video technology is advancing rapidly due to progress in the microprocessor and fiberoptic industries. It is likely that the system described in this report will be superseded by a more sophisticated, and perhaps more costly, system in a year or two.

Third, given the uncertain value of the dollar against foreign currency, principally the Japanese yen, equipment prices are subject to fluctuation. They are increasing dramatically now with the sliding value of the dollar. In fact, in recent years some video equipment has increased in cost as much as twenty percent in United States dollars.

The following cost ranges in Table 9.1 are based on estimates provided by technical consultants, derived from similar scale projects. They reflect spring 1989 prices. Although the projections represent the purchase and installation costs of video systems and include margins to account for unknown factors, they can only be considered as estimates until a detailed engineering study is conducted. Cost projections do not include any optional enhancements which would extend the Legislature's video system beyond gavel-to-gavel coverage, for example, a closed-circuit monitoring system, a video archive and a studio.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 9.1**  
**Capital Costs for Legislative Gavel-to-Gavel Television System:**  
**Equipment and Installation**

<b>Cameras and Control Equipment</b>	
<b>Option A: One chamber only, Assembly or Senate</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>
5 to 6 remote-control cameras and associated control room facility.	
<b>Option B: One chamber and one committee room</b>	<b>\$850,000</b>
5 to 6 remote-control cameras in one chamber and 3 to 4 in its main committee room, plus associated control room facilities.	
<b>Option C: Assembly and Senate chambers</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>
5 to 6 remote-control cameras in each of the chambers. Two complete control facilities required, one for each chamber.	
<b>Option D: Assembly, Senate and 2 committee rooms</b>	<b>\$1,700,000</b>
A maximum of 20 remote-control cameras—up to 6 in each chamber and 4 in each of the major committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate, Rooms 4202 and 4203. Two complete control facilities required.	
<b>Option E: Addition of press conference room</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
The cost to add a 2-camera remote-control system in the press conference room to any of the previous options. Separate control facility required.	
<b>Field Production Equipment</b>	
<b>Electronic field production (EFP) equipment</b>	<b>\$90,000–170,000</b>
A 2-camera unit to cover activities at other sites within the Capitol not wired into the fixed camera system. The low-range estimate assumes use of existing control facilities and includes cameras, cables, microphones, tripods and anvil carrying cases. If additional control equipment were needed, the cost for a 2-camera unit would be approximately \$170,000.	

*Ongoing operating costs.* Table 9.2 projects three levels of costs for annual operations of a legislative video system. Annual staff salaries would range from \$25,000 to \$55,000 per full-time employee, plus 30% for benefits and payroll taxes. Use of college interns to supplement the staff is assumed. The estimates reflect a 10% equipment depreciation rate and an allowance for supplies, parts and maintenance. It should be noted that in succeeding years the budget item for parts often increases. Warranties expire, and repairs and equipment replacements increase. Because operation within the Capitol is assumed, the cost estimates do not include rent or other administrative overhead expenses. As with video equipment estimates, these are provided only to indicate a general magnitude of expected expenses. (See Appendix G for more detailed budgets.)

**Table 9.2**  
**Annual Legislative Operating Costs**

<b>Minimum-level operation</b>	<b>\$443,000</b>
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of one chamber, its main committee room and press conference room. No coverage is provided for rooms not installed with fixed remote-control cameras. A staff of 6 full-time employees includes managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants. Estimate includes supplies, maintenance and depreciation.	
<b>Mid-level operation</b>	<b>\$705,000</b>
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of both chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. A staff of 9 full-time employees includes a managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants. Estimate includes supplies, maintenance and depreciation.	
<b>Large-scale operation</b>	<b>\$866,000</b>
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of both chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. With the use of transportable field production equipment, camera crew provides coverage of proceedings in rooms not installed with fixed remote-control cameras. A staff of 12 full-time employees includes a managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants. Estimate includes supplies, maintenance and depreciation.	

## **B. California Channel Technical Operations**

While the Legislature would generate gavel-to-gavel feeds of its proceedings, the California Channel, an independent nonprofit corporation, would distribute programming to the public. Its technical operations would include both a video production facility and satellite transmission capability. The major factor determining the design and cost of California Channel technical systems is the requirement for broadcast quality programming. A credible television network cannot afford to cease operating when equipment malfunctions. Its technical systems must, therefore, include backup recording equipment, dependable editing and playback units and sturdy microwave and satellite transmission systems. Like the legislative video installation, California Channel technical systems must be designed for longevity. Nonprofit organizations generally do not

have sufficient funding to upgrade equipment as frequently as commercial media organizations. The need for professional quality as well as long-lasting equipment translates into substantial capital costs.

### ***1. The California Channel Video System***

The California Channel would operate a master control and studio facility to receive, tape and transmit the Legislature's gavel-to-gavel feeds as well as produce additional programs to supplement legislative coverage. Ideally, California Channel headquarters would be located within walking distance of the Capitol complex to minimize the travel time of individuals participating in California Channel programs.

#### ***a. Master Control Facility***

Live gavel-to-gavel feeds generated by the legislative video system would travel from the Capitol to the master control facility by a microwave or fiberoptic link. Legislative proceedings slated for live transmission would be beamed directly from master control to a satellite. Some proceedings would be taped for transmission at a later hour and for use in other programs. All programming—live and tape-delayed legislative proceedings as well as programs produced by the California Channel itself—would be compiled in the master control facility and transmitted via satellite to cable systems, educational institutions and other viewers with the requisite satellite reception dishes.

The master control facility would consist of equipment to monitor and record incoming legislative video signals, record and edit programming produced by the California Channel and select and control outgoing programming from both live and prerecorded sources. Equipment components include video monitors, taping units, switchers, audio mixer, signal router, editors, character generators, a playback system and signal testing units.

For all practical purposes, there is little difference between small- and large-scale master control operations except for the number of recording units, the capacity of the signal router and perhaps the use of special effects units in more technically complex operations. Therefore, the equipment needs and cost difference between small- and large-scale operations are relatively minor. In order to design a master control facility that can respond flexibly to changes in the programming environment, both in the amount of programming and the types of formats produced, it is generally less expensive to build maximum capabilities into the system initially than to add them later.

#### ***b. The Capitol-California Channel Link***

The California Channel would receive legislative video signals via a telecommunications link between the Capitol and the master control facility. The best method to transmit video signals from the Capitol to the master control facility—microwave or optical fiber—depends on several factors: the number of chambers televised which, in turn, determines the number of signals transmitted between the two locations; the distance from the Capitol's control room to the master control facility; the availability of a "path" to transmit the feed; and architectural preservation considerations.<sup>6</sup>

Optical fiber offers several advantages over microwave. It is a broadband medium, capable of carrying several video signals on one hair-width glass fiber. It is flexible enough to handle more signals as the number of feeds generated by the Legislature increases. Since airwaves are not used for signal transmission, Federal Communications Commission frequency clearance and an operating license would not be required for optical fiber transmission. Further, an optical fiber installation would alleviate the need for a microwave antenna on the Capitol roof.

The actual hardware cost associated with a short-distance optical fiber link is competitive with a microwave system. However, the cost of trenching and installation can be extremely high, wiping out any advantages optical fiber might hold. Further, extending telecommunications-related wiring between the Capitol and California Channel headquarters requires crossing public streets and could place the California Channel in the position of being regulated as a franchised utility. Even though service tunnels may be available between the two locations, regulatory requirements could pose a barrier to optical fiber transmission.

Until the availability of conduit and the regulatory requirements of an optical fiber installation can be explored further, a microwave link appears to be the best means to transmit video signals between the Capitol and the California Channel. Nonetheless, hurdles would have to be cleared before transmission could begin. Because the airwaves would be the transmission path, the California Channel would need to obtain signal frequency clearance from the FCC and hire a licensed engineer to oversee transmission operations. Also, the Legislature's permission would be required to install a microwave antenna on the Capitol roof, an issue involving historical preservation and architectural integrity.<sup>7</sup>

### *c. Studio and Field Production Equipment*

The California Channel studio would be the site for regular news shows, interview and call-in programs, roundtable discussions and other programs. The video equipment to outfit a professional studio for broadcast quality productions includes cameras, lighting, control equipment, an audio system, recording units, backdrops, furnishings and a telephone system for call-in programs.

Until the California Channel produces a full slate of regularly scheduled programs, it may prefer to obtain studio space and crew on contract from an existing facility. Potential studio space is located at local television stations, Sacramento State University and Northern California News Satellite. The latter is located across the street from the Capitol in the Senator Hotel.<sup>8</sup>

As its operation grows, the California Channel would use portable field equipment to televise events outside the Capitol and its own studio. Initially, its camera crews might employ a single-camera electronic news-gathering (ENG) unit that is hand-held and battery-powered. For more extensive coverage from remote sites, camera crews would use electronic field production (EFP) equipment consisting of two or more cameras and associated control and recording units. In time, California Channel field coverage may warrant the purchase of a mobile production van outfitted with cameras, a control facility,



portable lighting, recording units, an editing system and microwave transmission capability.

## ***2. Satellite Transmission***

The second major technical component of the California Channel operation is satellite transmission, the means to distribute programming to cable television systems, educational institutions, rural residents and others not served by cable systems. It is both a complex issue and a costly undertaking, probably the single highest ongoing expense of a California Channel operation. (See Appendix H for definitions of technical terms.)

### ***a. Background***

The use of satellites for cable programming distribution was pioneered in 1975 by RCA. Its Satcom I satellite (since replaced by Satcom IIIR) launched the Home Box Office as a new breed of cable programming and program distribution. Since then, cable programming has grown and diversified. Cable channels like CNN, the Disney Channel, MTV, Black Entertainment Television and C-SPAN are transmitted to cable systems nationwide, primarily by three satellites: Galaxy I, Satcom IIIR and Galaxy III.<sup>9</sup> (A communications satellite typically contains 12 or 24 transponders, each capable of receiving and re-transmitting one television channel.)

Commercial satellite transmission operates primarily within two frequency ranges, C-band and Ku-band. The older communications satellites positioned in the geosynchronous orbit over the equator operate in the C-band, with downlink-uplink frequencies of 4–6 GHz (gigahertz). Most were launched in the late 1970s and early 1980s and have a life span of about 10 years. The newer generation of higher-powered satellites, also in geosynchronous orbit, contain Ku-band transponders operating at the higher downlink-uplink frequencies of 12–14 GHz. Some new hybrid satellites re-transmit both C- and Ku-band signals.

Because Ku-band satellite transmission requires smaller antennas and is not affected by terrestrial microwave interference, many educational programmers use it to deliver curriculum and training packages to schools and universities. Ku-band satellites are also widely used by businesses for training programs and other corporate communications.

Virtually all cable programming is transmitted via C-band satellites. Although most cable “birds” will reach the end of their 10-year lifespan in the early 1990s, launches have already been scheduled to place higher-powered C-band satellites with longer lifespans into orbit.

Cable systems generally aim separate fixed antennas (also referred to as dishes) at each of the satellites carrying cable programming. Some cable systems have reduced the number of antennas at their headends by retrofitting C-band antennas with multiple feedhorns in order to use one dish to receive signals from two or more neighboring satellites. Others have installed single multibeam antennas, capable of receiving signals from as many as 30 satellites, to replace their antenna farms of multiple dedicated dishes.<sup>10</sup>



### ***b. Distribution of the California Channel by Satellite***

On the face of it, the best way for the California Channel to reach cable systems, and, hence, California's cable subscribers is to lease transponder time on one of the C-band satellites used by most cable programmers. A number of factors make this a formidable challenge, however. First, these satellites are saturated with cable programming. Programmers generally rent transponders 24 hours per day and 365 days per year. If transponder time were available, it would be extremely expensive—up to \$1000 per hour for prime time “spot buys” and as much as \$1.5 million a year to lease a transponder full-time. (Prime time hours run from 1 p.m. to 11 p.m., and non-prime time hours are 11 p.m. to 1 p.m.) To avoid prohibitively expensive transponder costs, the California Channel could lease a transponder on a satellite which has not been saturated with cable programming, reducing transponder expenses by as much as one-half.<sup>11</sup>

Leasing a less expensive transponder on a non-cable satellite also presents a dilemma for the California Channel. Most cable systems would not have antennas fixed on the less used satellite and, hence, would not be able to receive the California Channel signal. Some fledgling cable networks have sidestepped this problem by purchasing antennas for cable systems unable to receive their programming. In antenna “give-away” programs, it is customary for the programmer to supply dishes but to require cable systems to provide the receivers, power splitters, cabling and antenna foundations themselves.<sup>12</sup>

If an estimated 400 cable systems were to receive antennas at approximately \$3,000 per dish, the one-time cost for a California Channel antenna program would be \$1,200,000.<sup>13</sup> By cutting the annual transponder lease expense approximately in half, the payback of instituting an antenna program could occur in as few as two years. An alternative to purchasing antennas for cable systems would be to offer grants to cable operators to acquire the equipment most appropriate to their needs, either satellite dishes or feedhorn retrofit kits for existing antennas. Both the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications and the Ontario Legislative Assembly, for example, instituted one-time grant programs to assist cable systems in acquiring dishes to receive their programming.

Transponder cost and accessibility are not the only satellite-related challenges facing the California Channel. Microwave interference in Sacramento could effectively prohibit C-band uplinking from California Channel headquarters near the Capitol. (The C-band frequency range of 4–6 GHz is shared with terrestrial microwave.) The Capitol complex is saturated with microwave signals as evidenced by the number of antennas that can be seen on nearby buildings. A frequency analysis of potential uplink sites near the Capitol would determine if a C-band uplink could be installed there. In the likelihood that the uplink site were located at a distance from the Capitol complex, the California Channel feed would need to be transmitted by microwave or fiberoptic cable from the master control facility to the uplink.

Even though Ku-band satellite usage offers solutions to both uplink interference and transponder availability problems, this option is not presently

viable for the California Channel. (The higher Ku-band frequency of 12–14 GHz does not receive interference from typical microwave signals.) Cable operators and programmers show little movement toward large-scale use of Ku-band satellites. Because Ku-band systems are higher-powered and require smaller antennas, they are ideal for direct-to-home service. The potential erosion of cable operators' markets is a major reason for their reluctance to adopt Ku-band systems. Another is the existence of a well-established and extensive infrastructure of C-band satellites and antennas.<sup>14</sup> The current satellite situation is relatively fluid, however, and will need to be reassessed by the time the California Channel is launched.

### ***c. The California Channel's Satellite Uplink***

The earthbound component of the satellite distribution system is the uplink, the satellite dish and associated electronic equipment which would transmit the California Channel signal to the satellite transponder. The selection of an appropriate site for the uplink is a critical, and potentially costly, aspect of the installation process. The site must be free of interfering microwave signals, and the facility itself must be sufficiently stable and secure to withstand inclement weather and vandalism.

The engineering study which would determine the availability of a frequency path is a prerequisite to applying for a construction permit from the FCC. The preliminary filing process to obtain a construction permit can take at least six months. Once the facility is constructed and is shown to operate successfully, the application for a permanent operating license may take an additional two months.

If Capitol-area frequency interference requires the uplink to be located at a distance from the master control facility, the California Channel feed will need to be transmitted to the uplink by microwave. Because the California Channel will operate both microwave and satellite transmission systems, it will require two licenses from the FCC. Also, the California Channel staff must include someone with a Federal Communications Commission General Class Broadcasting License who will be legally responsible for the proper operation of the uplink and microwave equipment.

During the start-up phase when the programming day is relatively short, the California Channel may want to rent time on an existing uplink while it evaluates and fine tunes its programming. Once the California Channel is firmly established, it can initiate the licensing process and construct its own uplink.

### ***3. Cost Summary: California Channel Video and Satellite Systems***

*Equipment costs.* Capital costs associated with opening the doors of the California Channel headquarters include both video and satellite technical systems. Equipment requirements would be determined by an engineering study, estimated at a minimum of \$100,000. The major start-up costs of the California Channel operation are summarized below in Table 9.3. Additional detail is provided in Appendix G.

**Table 9.3**  
**California Channel Video and Satellite Capital Costs:**  
**Equipment and Installation**

<b>Master Control Facility</b>	
<b>Minimum-level to large-scale operation</b>	<b>\$820,000–1,380,000</b>
Monitoring, taping, editing and playback equipment necessary to receive and record the Legislature's proceedings and compile programming from a variety of sources for live and tape-delayed transmission.	
<b>Microwave System</b>	
<b>Transmission between Capitol and California Channel</b>	<b>\$50,000–70,000</b>
Equipment for transmission to the California Channel of one channel per legislative chamber plus a one-channel return feed from the California Channel to the Capitol.	
<b>Studio</b>	
<b>Three-camera studio</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>
Estimate for professional quality studio with 3 cameras, lighting, audio system, control facility, backdrops, furnishings and telephone system for call-in programs. During the Channel's start-up period, studio space would be rented.	
<b>Field Production Equipment</b>	
<b>Electronic news-gathering (ENG) unit</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
A portable one-camera system which includes a self-contained taping unit, batteries, lighting kit and accessories.	
<b>Electronic field production (EFP) equipment</b>	<b>\$170,000–400,000</b>
A basic 2-camera unit plus associated control equipment for coverage of activities at remote sites is estimated at \$170,000. A fully outfitted mobile production van would cost at least \$400,000.	
<b>Satellite Transmission</b>	
<b>Satellite uplink purchase and installation</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
Antenna and associated electronic equipment, plus secure housing. During the Channel's start-up period, uplinking would be obtained on contract from a service provider.	
<b>Microwave system</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>
Equipment for transmission of the California Channel signal (one channel) from master control to the satellite uplink.	

*Ongoing operating expenses.* Staff and satellite transmission are the two major ongoing expenses for the California Channel operation. Staff salaries would range from \$25,000 to \$55,000, plus 30% for benefits and payroll taxes. Because the California Channel would be responsible for promoting its programming to cable systems, educational institutions and the public, a portion of the budget is allocated to marketing and public relations. An equipment depreciation factor of 10% of the purchase price is included in ongoing costs, as well as the expenses of supplies, parts and maintenance. Rent for office space is also factored into the operating costs.

Satellite transponder lease costs are projected at \$350 per hour for transmitting a limited number of hours each day. Volume discounts can usually be obtained for long-term contracts exceeding eight hours a day. The cost for a full-time transponder on a satellite which has not been saturated with other cable programming is estimated at \$780,000 per year. Budget estimates for three levels of operations are projected in Table 9.4.

**Table 9.4**  
**Annual California Channel Operating Costs**

<p><b>Minimum-level operation</b></p> <p>The California Channel distributes live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel programming of one chamber, its main committee room and the press conference room—4 hours per day. Office space is leased in a building near the Capitol. Its staff of 8 includes executive director, producer-director, engineer and technicians, plus a small administrative staff that includes a position for marketing and fund raising. Estimate includes satellite uplink rent, transponder lease, supplies, maintenance and depreciation. It also includes administrative operating expenses.</p>	<p><b>\$1,336,000</b></p>
<p><b>Mid-level operation</b></p> <p>The California Channel transmits live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel coverage of two chambers, their main committee rooms and press conference room—8 hours per day. It produces a weekly news program. Studio time is rented by the hour. An electronic news-gathering unit is used for limited remote site coverage. Office space is leased in a building near the Capitol. The staff of 12 includes executive director, technical director-producer, engineer, technicians and an administrative staff that includes a marketing-fund raising position. Estimate includes satellite uplink rent, transponder lease, supplies, maintenance and depreciation. It also includes administrative operating expenses.</p>	<p><b>\$2,078,000</b></p>
<p><b>Large-scale operation</b></p> <p>The California Channel transmits live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel coverage of both chambers and their main committee rooms plus press conferences for 12 hours per day from a satellite uplink which it owns and operates. Coverage of many off-site events is provided with field equipment. The Channel produces several daily and weekly news, analysis and viewer call-in programs from its own studio. Office and studio space is leased in a building near the Capitol. The staff of 18 includes executive director, technical director, engineer, producers, technicians and an administrative staff that includes a marketing-fund raising position. Estimate includes transponder lease, supplies, maintenance and depreciation. It also includes administrative operating expenses.</p>	<p><b>\$2,396,000</b></p>

## **C. Overview of Legislative and California Channel Technical System Costs**

This chapter presents a number of video and satellite technology considerations for legislative and California Channel system planners, summarized in Table 9.5. Technical systems and costs are divided between the Legislature, responsible for generating a signal of its proceedings, and the California Channel nonprofit organization, responsible for distributing a feed to

the public. Optional considerations—for example, a legislative closed-circuit monitoring system or a California Channel grant program to purchase antennas for cable systems—are not included in the cost summaries. The cost projections assume that all legislative video operations are housed within the Capitol; therefore, no expenditures for office or studio rent are included in legislative estimates.

Because of the unknown, and potentially exorbitant, cost of installing optical fiber links between the Capitol and the master control facility and from there to the satellite uplink, costs for a microwave transmission system are projected instead. The major capital expenses of a California Channel-operated studio and satellite uplink are included in the large-scale system estimate only. The costs to rent these services are projected in the minimum- and mid-level estimates.

The same words of caution are applied to these cost figures as in previous discussions. Without comprehensive engineering studies, cost projections can only be considered estimates. In addition, they are time sensitive, representing spring 1989 dollars. The cost projections cannot reflect price fluctuations due to technological advances, inflation and the changing value of the dollar against foreign currency.

## D. Conclusions

Tremendous technical advances have taken place in video systems in the past decade. Legislative television systems which provide gavel-to-gavel coverage can now make use of remote-control cameras operated at a distance from the chambers without the intrusion of camera operators on the floor. Automated control functions have streamlined operations and minimized staffing requirements. And microprocessor-based low-light cameras have eliminated the need for hot and glaring lights in legislative chambers.

This chapter has outlined the basic building blocks of legislative and California Channel technical systems and has presented cost estimates for each. In summary, the key considerations regarding the technical operation of a state public affairs television channel are:

*Comprehensive planning process.* A full-scale state public affairs television channel as envisioned by this study is a decidedly ambitious endeavor. This chapter presents a range of options and cost estimates for a typical gavel-to-gavel operation. The ultimate design of the Legislature's video system will be determined by its own internal planning process. Whether planning is conducted by one house or both, either individually or in a joint effort, it is imperative that the system design be derived from policy considerations. Key among these are: minimum intrusion into the legislative process, adherence to legislative rules of order and preservation of the architectural integrity of the Capitol. A further consideration which will shape system design and cost is the tradeoff between the initial capital costs and ongoing operating expenses.

*Legislative installation of its own video operations.* In line with the dual organizational structure recommended by this study for the operation of a state



**Table 9.5**  
**Cost Summary: Legislative and California Channel**  
**Capital and Operating Expenses**

<b>Minimum-Level System</b>		
<b>Legislature:</b> Gavel-to-gavel coverage of one chamber, its main committee room and press conference room. 6 staff.		
<b>California Channel:</b> Satellite feed 4 hours per day, 260 days per year. Satellite uplink rented. 8 staff.		
<b>Start-up and capital expenses</b>	<b>Legislature</b>	<b>California Channel</b>
Engineering studies	\$100,000	\$100,000
Equipment and installation	\$1,150,000	\$970,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>		
Salaries, admin., and tech. operating costs	\$443,000	\$1,336,000
<b>Mid-Level System</b>		
<b>Legislature:</b> Gavel-to-gavel coverage of both chambers, two main committee rooms and press conference room. 9 staff.		
<b>California Channel:</b> Satellite feed 8 hours per day, 260 days per year. Satellite uplink rented. One weekly news programs. Studio space rented. Some remote-site coverage. 12 staff.		
<b>Start-up and capital expenses</b>	<b>Legislature</b>	<b>California Channel</b>
Engineering studies	\$150,000	\$100,000
Equipment and installation	\$2,000,000	\$1,250,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>		
Salaries, admin., and tech. operating costs	\$705,000	\$2,078,000
<b>Large-Scale System</b>		
<b>Legislature:</b> Gavel-to-gavel coverage of both chambers, two main committee rooms and press conference room. Expanded coverage provided by field equipment for rooms without fixed cameras. 12 staff.		
<b>California Channel:</b> Satellite feed 12 hours per day, 365 days per year. Satellite uplink owned and operated by California Channel. Several programs produced in its own studio such as a news summary, interviews, call-ins. Expanded coverage of state government activities and conferences provided with field production units. 18 staff.		
<b>Start-up and capital expenses</b>	<b>Legislature</b>	<b>California Channel</b>
Engineering studies	\$150,000	\$150,000
Equipment and installation	\$2,170,000	\$2,880,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>		
Salaries, admin., and tech. operating costs	\$866,000	\$2,396,000

Note: Legislative annual costs assume operation within the Capitol and do not include rent or other administrative overhead expenses.

public affairs channel, technical systems and costs are divided between the Legislature and the California Channel. The legislative video system proposed for gavel-to-gavel coverage is based on remote-control cameras in one or both chambers with the option of additional installations in committee rooms and the governor's press conference room. An obvious benefit of a gavel-to-gavel television system is the opportunity to develop a closed-circuit video system to streamline the work of legislators, their staff members, the press and others who monitor legislative proceedings. A video archive and a studio are further options.

*The California Channel's role in distributing programming to the public.* The California Channel nonprofit organization, responsible for compiling programming and distributing it to the public, would operate a master control and studio facility near the Capitol. In addition to transmitting the gavel-to-gavel feeds provided by the Legislature, the California Channel would produce its own programs such as news summaries, interviews, roundtable discussions and viewer call-in programs.

A major expense of the California Channel's operation is the satellite transmission system to distribute its signal to cable systems, educational institutions and rural residents beyond the reach of cable wiring. A factor critical to the California Channel's success is establishing a satellite network that can reach a majority of cable systems—either by transmitting the signal via one of the satellites widely used for cable programming or leasing a transponder on a less used, and less expensive, satellite and purchasing antennas for those cable systems unable to access that satellite.

*Importance of broadcast quality production.* Television viewers are accustomed to high quality video productions. Although California Channel programming need not have the highly edited polish of the nightly network news, it must be broadcast quality if it is to be accepted by television viewers. The video equipment presented in this chapter for legislative and California Channel operations reflects mid-level broadcast quality systems.

*Comprehensive engineering studies—an important next step.* Although this chapter provides cost estimates for both legislative and California Channel technical systems, these can only approximate the general magnitude of start-up and operating costs. Full-scale engineering studies must be conducted by both the Legislature and the California Channel in order to determine fine-tuned system designs and cost projections.

## NOTES

1. One-half inch tape formats now in use for video production are Beta SP (Sony) and MII (Panasonic). The Beta SP format is a broadcast quality system, not to be confused with the consumer Beta format which is slated to be discontinued according to Sony. Both ABC and CBS use Beta. NBC and C-SPAN use MII.

The major manufacturers of remote-control equipment are Total Spectrum Manufacturing (TSM) of West Nyack NY, Radamec Power Optics (formerly Evershed Power Optics, or EPO) and Vinten Ltd., both based in England. While the latter systems are significantly more expensive than TSM, they also offer options that are more advantageous for legislative television production.

Review of legislative video system configurations and costs was provided by Kenneth Fause of Smith, Fause and Associates, Culver City, CA, spring 1989. Technical information was also provided by:

Tom Beal, Vice President and Regional Manager, Midwest Communications, Burbank, CA;  
 Steve Beal, Branch Manager, Midwest Communications, Anaheim, CA;  
 Bill Darst, Production Center Manager, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA;  
 Doug Lichvar, Chief Engineer, School of Engineering Instructional Television, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA;  
 Mark Siegel, Account Executive, Shoreline Video, Los Angeles, CA, currently with Ampex, Redwood, CA.

2. An electronic news-gathering unit (ENG) is a portable self-contained camera and taping system that is used for remote-site coverage. It is battery operated and hand-held. Electronic field production (EFP) equipment allows more extensive and technically sophisticated remote-site coverage. More than one camera can be used, and the system is operated with control equipment such as a video switcher and audio mixer. EFP units often operate in conjunction with mobile (truck or van) control facilities.
3. Wolinsky, Leo C. "Lawmakers Using Electronic Medium to Get Message Out." *Los Angeles Times* (April 16, 1989): I-3.
4. Information on existing Capitol audio and video systems was provided by state Capitol electronics technicians, Mark Herin and Mike Fenton, June 1987, and: McVicar, Gregg. "CALSPAN, the California Network." Unpublished paper, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 1986.
5. Closed-circuit legislative monitoring system: The cost to add internally-generated channels to the Capitol's cable television hook-up could be minimal, from \$2000 to \$8,000 per channel. Unknown factors that could increase this estimate include the need for additional line amplifiers and filters, the need to add more cable drops to the existing system and whether or not the closed-circuit system would be extended beyond the Capitol to buildings in the Capitol complex.

Archive: Cost estimates for a legislative video archive facility would depend on the number and quality of recording units acquired, the number of hours of proceedings taped, the quality of tape stock used and the design of the storage facility, among other factors.

Studio: A basic legislative studio could be installed for \$200,000, with a professional quality studio appropriate for broadcast purposes costing \$600,000 or more.

6. Review of microwave and optical fiber options and costs was provided by Kenneth Fause of Smith, Fause and Associates, Culver City, CA, spring 1989. Information was also provided by: Tom Bedocs, Telecommunications Engineer, University of Southern California School of Engineering, Instructional TV, Los Angeles, CA; Kevin D. Floyd, RF Regional Sales Manager, Midwest Communications, Burbank, CA. Spencer Freund, Director of University Media Services, Sacramento State University, Sacramento, CA; Gerry Morris, GM Communications, Los Angeles CA.
7. See Article IV, Section 28 of the *Constitution of California* for provisions regarding the maintenance of the historically restored areas of the Capitol.
8. The hourly rate for studio rental is approximately \$250–300. Information about Sacramento studios was provided by : Bob Gore, former President, Executive Media; and Allen Hinderstein, Assistant Director for Media Technology, Sacramento State University; summer 1987.
9. Source: WestSat Communications. *Satellite Channel Chart 7*, no. 6 (November–December 1987).  
Hughes Galaxy I, for example, carries the Disney Channel, Showtime, the CNN channels and HBO on separate transponders. GE Americom owns the Satcom IIIR and Satcom IV satellites which transmit such channels as Bravo, Home Shopping Club, Movietime, Black Entertainment Television (BET), among others. Programming transmitted by Hughes Galaxy III includes C-SPAN, Nickelodeon, MTV and the Weather Channel.
10. In California, for example, nearly 90 cable systems use the Simulsat multibeam antenna to pick up signals from several different satellites. Source: Scott Grone, Antenna Technology Corporation, Mesa, AZ, Dec. 1987.
11. Review of satellite information was provided spring 1989 by Kenneth Fause, Smith, Fause and Associates, Culver City, CA, and Debora Deffaa, IDB Communications, Culver City, CA. Additional information was obtained from a number of sources, summer and fall 1987: Grace Leone, President, EFC Satellite Services, Los Angeles, CA; Stephen Tom, Regional Sales Manager, Bonneville Satellite Corp., Los Angeles, CA; Kurt Thoss, Fred Horowitz, and Ed Campbell, GE American, New York and Princeton, NJ; Woody Hubbell, Satellite Services Representative, Conus Communications, Minneapolis, MN; Bob Zitter, Home Box Office Inc., New York, NY.
12. Information on satellite antenna programs was provided by Delbert Heller, Director of Engineering, Viacom Cable, Pleasanton, CA, Feb. 1988.
13. Without further study, it is difficult to determine the precise number of cable headends that would need to acquire antennas or dual feedhorn retrofits in order to receive California Channel programming. According to the 1989 *Television and Cable Factbook*, there are 367 cable systems in California serving 1,149 communities. Most operate more than one franchise, although some use one headend for several closely situated franchises. At least 90 systems use the multibeam Simulsat antenna and, other than acquiring an additional feedhorn, would not need to acquire an antenna for the California Channel.
14. A joint venture by HBO and GE Americom to build and launch Satcom K-3 to transmit cable programming failed to attract customers despite a massive antenna “give-away” program to supply cable systems with Ku-band dishes. For more information on the C- vs. Ku-band debate in the cable industry, see:

"Satellite Communications Today: A New Reality." Report by the Home Box Office, New York, 1986.

"Throwing in the Towel on K-3 and Cable." *Broadcasting* (December 12, 1988): 45.

Covens, Lloyd. "Cable Still Backs C-Band ... for Now." *Via Satellite 2*, no. 7 (July 1987): 22-24.

Krasilovsky, Peter. "Cable Operators Are Slow to Accept Ku-Band." *Via Satellite 2*, no. 5 (May 1987): 20-21.

Elbert, Bruce R. "Next Generation C-Band Satellite Systems for Cable Program Distribution." Paper presented at the National Cable Television Association Conference, Los Angeles, CA, May 1988.

"Video Distribution: C-Band into the 21st Century." *Uplink 2* (Fall 1987): 2-5.



## **Chapter 10**

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# **Funding Options**

For the California Channel to operate as a credible media organization, it must be a permanent service, immune to sudden economic or political change. The network will thus require independent, reliable and long-term sources of funding to produce and distribute programming of the highest quality. Funding sources must be sufficiently broad and diverse to overcome uncertainties in annual state budget cycles or sudden downturns in various sectors of the economy. Yet stable financing for nonprofit ventures is not always easy to obtain. Public broadcast stations, for example, have struggled for years to attain economic viability. Even with the help of federal subsidies, many survive today only by uncomfortably narrow margins.

It will also be important for the California Channel to raise funding in ways that will not compromise the integrity of its programming. Commercial television has been criticized for being too sponsor-dependent, avoiding controversial programs that are unpalatable to major sponsors. Even federal funding of public television through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has been criticized for being overly politicized.<sup>1</sup> Whoever holds political office in this state should not be able to affect the California Channel's ability to deliver unbiased coverage of government proceedings. The California Channel should chronicle changes in the political power base, not be subject to them. Although it is often said that "he

who pays the piper calls the tune," any potential source of influence over programming must be minimized if the California Channel is to fulfill its obligations of balance and neutrality to the viewing public.

For these reasons, this report recommends that the organizational costs and responsibilities of public affairs coverage be divided between the Legislature and the California Channel, and that the California Channel itself receive funding from a variety of sources. The Legislature would install and operate its own video system, supplying gavel-to-gavel feeds to the California Channel and, at the same time, routing the video signals to a closed-circuit television system within the Capitol. A legislative video monitoring system would supply legislators' offices with coverage of floor debates, committee hearings and press conferences, allowing the Legislature to improve the efficiency of its internal operations. Legislative rules would dictate camera placement and other operational procedures.

The California Channel, an independent nonprofit corporation, would distribute legislative and other programming to the public. The California Channel's start-up costs and its initial two to three years of operation would be sought from major California foundations and corporations. In subsequent years, the California Channel would be primarily self-supporting, with funding provided by cable systems, corporate and foundation underwriters, the sale of services and possible indirect legislative assistance through tax credits.

This two-part organizational scheme based on a mix of funding sources has worked successfully for C-SPAN at the national level. It would spread the fiscal responsibility broadly enough so that no one "piper" would have sufficient control to "call the tune."

## **A. Legislative Funding: Public Information and Internal Efficiency**

A California Channel has a limited range of funding options: it can be financed fully by the government; it can seek all its funding from private individuals and organizations; or it can pursue a combination of funding sources. For the reasons described below, dividing the responsibility for California Channel funding among the Legislature, foundations, corporate underwriters, cable systems, and sales of services is the best way to ensure the network's long-term stability and neutrality.

Although full funding and operation of government television services by legislative bodies has been adopted in a few states, it is not recommended for California. It is possible, of course, for the Legislature to create governmental programming and distribute it from Sacramento by satellite to public broadcast stations and cable systems around the state. But there are dangers to "single source" legislative funding or over-reliance on legislative support.

### ***1. The Case Against Full Legislative Funding***

Sustaining the California Channel with full legislative funding would subject the network to the vagaries of the annual budgeting process, making public access to legislative proceedings dependent on Sacramento fiscal cycles.

Budget crises, fluctuations in the health of the state's economy, unforeseen fiscal emergencies—all can drain funding away from public affairs programming.

Furthermore, long-term legislative funding can never be assured. Whether the Legislature would continue to pay the entire costs of a public affairs network over many years of operation is uncertain, particularly in the wake of Proposition 13 and other periodic attempts to reduce government spending. Some legislators might believe that taxpayers will be reluctant to pay for a network that covers state government.

Full legislative funding would also raise the potential for political influence—the threat or suggestion that funding might be terminated if a particular legislator or issue is not covered favorably. Once a public affairs network becomes dependent on legislative funding, it may begin to shape its programming to preserve that funding. Temptations to present flattering programming or to eschew critical programming may arise. The specter of content control may also create the public *perception*, whether accurate or not, that legislative programming is one-sided or biased. This, in turn, would impede the distribution of programming into homes, since public broadcast stations and cable systems, which are privately owned and under no compulsion to carry legislative programming, might be reluctant to transmit material not mediated by a journalistically independent organization.

Most significantly, full legislative funding would preclude certain forms of programming from carriage on a statewide public affairs network. In focus groups and a public opinion poll conducted by the California Channel study, participants expressed a desire for programming that placed the issues of the day in broader perspective such as newscasts, interviews, documentaries and roundtable discussions. It would clearly be inappropriate for the Legislature to produce programming which, in essence, commented on the Legislature itself. Poll respondents and focus group participants also indicated a desire for broader programming than Sacramento-based gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage. Yet it is doubtful that the Legislature would have the desire or ability to include executive branch coverage, Supreme Court oral arguments, city council meetings or special election coverage in its programming. If the California Channel is to become a true statewide public affairs network, complete legislative funding and control would seem to be impracticable.

## ***2. The Case Against Full Private Funding***

An alternative funding option—exclusive reliance on private funding sources—would also be problematic. Foundations prefer to support the start-up efforts of worthy ventures but not to sustain their operating costs indefinitely. Advertising and premium channel fees do not seem appropriate for California Channel support (see discussion below). And corporate underwriting and cable subscription fees, while capable of significantly supporting the Channel's construction and operating costs, would probably not be available to pay for installation of equipment in the Capitol.

The Legislature would be understandably reluctant to allow an independent organization to install and operate permanent video cameras in the state Capitol

without legislative oversight or control. Legislatures have generally funded and controlled such video systems themselves—to ensure that coverage is balanced, to acquire the benefits of an internal video monitoring system and on occasion to create a video archive for historical purposes. Even if private funding were available to pay for equipment to generate legislative video signals, the Legislature would undoubtedly prefer to own and control that equipment itself.

### ***3. The Case for Shared Legislative and Private Funding***

Although full legislative or private funding appear infeasible, a strong case can be made for a mixture of both. The principal benefit of a statewide public affairs network would be to open the affairs of government to the people. Enhancing the flow of government information to the public has traditionally been viewed as a significant government obligation. Because a new public affairs network would improve communications between the Legislature and the public, the costs of that network should be borne in part by the Legislature itself.

The Legislature would moreover realize a clear benefit from the installation of video equipment to cover its activities, and it would therefore be in the Legislature's own interests to pay for a portion of the costs. Funding of video monitoring equipment would give the Legislature a powerful internal information system, enhancing and modernizing the existing audio-only monitors ("squawk boxes"). Legislators and their staff would be able to follow floor proceedings, committee hearings or press conferences from their offices, saving them time and increasing their access to information. Enhancements to the system could include a channel which replays specific floor debates or committee hearings on demand and text-based informational channels for schedule updates. A more ambitious system would involve the development of a local area network (LAN) which, in addition to video channels, would include voice mail, computer and word processing interconnections between offices and access to a data retrieval system with daily schedules, copies of bills and information from party leaders. Other government bodies, such as the United States House of Representatives, a number of parliaments and other state legislatures, have installed internal video systems for comparable purposes.

Private interests would also gain from a statewide public affairs channel and could be expected to contribute toward its support. Businesses and lobbying organizations would benefit from their increased ability to track the activities of the Legislature. Broadcast and print news organizations would be able to increase their legislative coverage. Cable systems would be able to offer a valuable public service and at the same time attract new subscribers who are interested in state public affairs. And individual citizens would be able to increase their understanding of state government.

For these reasons, funding the California Channel from a combination of sources is both feasible and appropriate. This study therefore recommends adoption of the joint funding model utilized in C-SPAN's coverage of Congress. Under this model, the Legislature would fund the installation and ongoing operation of its own internal video system and make its gavel-to-gavel feeds available to outside organizations. The nonprofit California Channel would fund its own operation and distribute that programming to the public.

The one-time installation expenses for a legislative video system in the Capitol based on remote-control camera operations would range from \$600,000 to \$2 million, depending on the number of rooms with cameras and the extent of the closed-circuit monitoring system. Ongoing operating costs would range from \$443,000 to \$866,000, again depending on the complexity of the operation. (See Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion of technical costs and options.) These costs are low compared to California's nearly \$50 billion annual budget. They are also a remarkably inexpensive way to improve public understanding of the democratic process.

## **B. California Channel Funding: A Package of Options**

Funding sources for the California Channel are needed for two phases of development: the start-up period and ongoing operations. Start-up funding would be sought from major California foundations and corporate underwriters for the first two to three years of operation. Once established, ongoing revenue would come from cable system license fees, continued corporate and foundation underwriting, sales of services and possible indirect legislative support through tax credits to participating organizations.

### ***1. Start-Up Funding: Foundation and Corporate Underwriting***

This report recommends that the California Channel fund its capital and operational expenses for the first two to three years with grants from major California foundations and corporations. California foundations and corporations are among the leading philanthropists in the nation. They have supported a wide range of projects benefiting the people of California, including aid to scientific research, education, health, transportation, poverty, housing and political reform. Conversations with foundation and corporate leaders indicate a willingness to consider supporting such a statewide public affairs television network. They acknowledge the significance of constructing the first television network in the state that would open the processes of government to the public. Leaders in the cable television industry have also indicated a willingness to support the California Channel as a public service to the people of the state.

The start-up and operating expenses for the California Channel are expected to be substantially higher than the Legislature's expenses. The California Channel would need to obtain a microwave or optical fiber link between the Capitol and California Channel headquarters to receive the signals generated by the Legislature; install equipment to record simultaneous video feeds from a number of different Capitol sources; build a studio; acquire portable video equipment for remote site coverage; produce additional programming such as news summaries and roundtable discussions to supplement gavel-to-gavel committee and floor coverage; acquire a satellite uplink; lease satellite transponder time; and hire staff to operate these facilities. Once the California Channel begins to produce its own programming in addition to legislative coverage, its equipment and operational costs will increase substantially. Produced programs are both labor- and technology-intensive. The California Channel would also be responsible for satellite distribution, probably the single highest expense outside of personnel.



California Channel start-up costs for video and satellite equipment range from \$970,000 to \$2,880,000, depending on the complexity of the operation. Annual operating costs for staff, supplies, satellite transponder lease, fundraising and promotional expenses are estimated at \$1.3 to \$2.4 million, depending upon such factors as the number of hours of satellite transmission, the size of staff and the technical complexity of the operation. (See Chapter 9, "Technical and Budget.")

Foundation and corporate support would be sought in the form of grants as well as donations of equipment and services. A corporation or foundation, for example, might be willing to purchase a satellite uplink for the California Channel. An uplink is a powerful symbol of enlightened communication, much like a bridge or a lighthouse beacon. Its purchase would be an affordable one-time expenditure, enabling the donor to offer an important and lasting public service to millions of Californians.<sup>2</sup>

## ***2. Ongoing Funding: Cable Industry Support***

By the end of the first full year of operation, the California Channel will have had a chance to prove itself. If its programming is well-produced, timely, relevant and of high quality, it will provide an attractive package for cable systems around the state. At that point, the California Channel would begin to convert to a self-sustaining operation, independent of major foundation support. Revenue would be obtained from cable license fees, corporate underwriting similar to the Public Broadcasting Service and sales of services. Of these, an important source of revenue would be license fees paid by cable systems to the California Channel on a per subscriber per month basis. This is the funding model successfully implemented by C-SPAN. (See Chapter 3.)

Interviews with cable operators for this study indicate support for the California Channel, provided certain conditions are met. Cable operators recommend that the network be offered free of charge for an introductory period, enabling them to assess the programming and determine whether it is valued by their subscribers. After the test period, operators would be in a better position to decide whether to continue the channel on a license fee basis. (See Chapter 7, "Cable Distribution," for further discussion.)

Cable operators might be willing to contribute toward the California Channel's operating costs on a phase-in basis, contributing one cent per subscriber at the beginning of the second full year of operation and up to three cents in future years. If 100% of California's cable systems carried the California Channel, a three-cent license fee would cover 80% of the Channel's operating costs for a mid-level system, leaving the Channel to obtain the remaining 20% of its budget from other sources. If 75% of California's cable systems supported the California Channel on a four-cent monthly subscriber basis, it would receive 80% of the budget it needed to operate a mid-level system. (See Table 10.1 at the end of this chapter.)

These estimates are based on a statewide cable subscribership of five million households. As new cable systems are built or existing systems expand their services to make them more attractive to potential customers, it is reasonable to

expect that cable penetration will increase. As that happens, California Channel revenues from cable license fees will also increase.

### **3. *Possible Indirect Legislative Funding: Support through Tax Credits***

Full funding of legislative television programming by *direct* state appropriations is relatively rare among the fifty states. In the few states where legislative media services televise proceedings on a gavel-to-gavel basis, programming is funded directly by state appropriations. Examples are Minnesota's Senate Media Services, which airs Senate proceedings as well as news and discussion programs, and Rhode Island's Legislative Radio and Television Office, which televises both House and Senate proceedings. Even in these instances, however, the full costs of program distribution are shared by the television stations and cable systems that carry the programming.

In most states, public affairs television programming which focuses on legislative proceedings is produced and aired by public television stations. All states except California and Texas fund a portion of the operations of their public television stations with state legislative appropriations. Legislative programming is generally funded *indirectly* through the overall programming budgets of each station. In only a few states is a specific line-item of the budget earmarked for legislative programming on public television, in particular, those states where legislative coverage is extensive. In Kentucky, for example, the Legislature appropriates a portion of the budget for its public television network's legislative coverage. And in Massachusetts, where public television airs gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the House, legislative coverage is funded on contract with WGBH. (See Chapter 4, "Other States.")

Although California has not funded its public broadcast stations since 1983, the Legislature may be able provide indirect support for the California Channel. It could give cable systems which carry the California Channel a tax credit against their state income tax, enabling them to defray the costs of carriage. Such tax credits have the advantage of not requiring direct public funding, yet they would provide cable systems with a significant incentive to carry California Channel programming.

Tax credits are frequently used to provide incentives for members of the public to support socially desirable activities. At the federal level, tax credits have encouraged business investments, political contributions, work incentives, energy savings, fuel from nonconventional sources, research and the preservation of historic buildings. Energy tax credits, for example, have motivated taxpayers to install energy-saving devices in their homes.<sup>3</sup> And the 25% historic preservation tax has fostered the rehabilitation of historic buildings.<sup>4</sup> In California, individuals making contributions to political candidates receive a 25% tax credit—encouraging them to support the candidates of their choice. A tax credit for contributors to the California Channel would promote similar financial support.

If 75% of California's cable systems paid a license fee of three cents a month per subscriber to the California Channel, it would receive \$1.4 million in annual revenue. A 50% tax credit would allow cable systems to deduct an aggregate of

\$700,000 million from their state taxes, reducing their actual monthly per subscriber license fees to a net of one-and-a-half cents. A 100% tax credit would reduce that monthly payment to a net of zero. Cable systems would, of course, still have remaining operating costs associated with receiving programming via satellite and distributing it to subscribers.

The Legislature might also give contributors to the California Channel a tax credit to reduce individual and corporate income taxes directly. Because the California Channel would be a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation, contributors would already receive a tax deduction on their state and federal income taxes. Nevertheless, a 50% or 100% tax credit would provide a greater and more direct benefit.

Proposition 73 on the June 1988 ballot prevents the Legislature from spending any money on "mass mailings" to constituents, an amount which in the past has totaled approximately \$1.8 million a year. Because the funding for such mass mailings would otherwise have been appropriated, the Legislature could simply reassign this expenditure to a California Channel tax credit. In so doing, the Legislature would be spending those funds on communicating with the electorate—the same general purpose for which the funds had traditionally been appropriated.

#### ***4. Funding Options Not Recommended***

Other funding options exist but are not recommended. One would be to offer the California Channel as a premium cable channel. The California Channel's signal would be scrambled and cable television subscribers wishing to see it would pay a monthly fee to have it unscrambled, just as subscribers now pay for and receive Home Box Office or Showtime. Five percent of California's five million cable subscribers paying \$1.20 a month for the California Channel would generate \$3,600,000 a year. By splitting the income between cable systems and the California Channel, \$1,800,000 would be available to the California Channel, sufficient to cover its annual operating expenses.

A premium channel, however, would make the California Channel accessible only to those few television viewers who could afford it, thus defeating its purpose. In effect, the California Channel would become a special interest channel, available only to an elite group of viewers and not to the largest possible number of citizens. For this reason alone, the premium channel option is not recommended.

A second potential source of California Channel funding might be the sale of commercial advertising. Although advertising sales generate billions of dollars for commercial broadcast stations, public affairs programming has generally been considered an inappropriate recipient of advertiser support. Audiences are generally too small to attract much revenue, and most advertising is unsuitable for insertion in government affairs programming. More importantly, advertising support could create pressures that might influence programming content, such as avoidance of controversial topics or attempts to appeal to the tastes of mass audiences. For these reasons, advertising is also not recommended as a funding source for the California Channel.

### 5. *Other Viable Sources of Funding*

Cable system license fees would not provide full funding for the California Channel. Like C-SPAN, the California Channel would raise a percentage of its annual budget from a variety of additional sources.

*Underwriting, private donations and planned giving.* Foundations and corporations would be encouraged to support California Channel programming through underwriting, an approach used by both the Public Broadcasting Service and C-SPAN. The California Channel could acknowledge foundation and corporate contributions with announcements in the credits at the beginning and end of programs ("This program has been made possible in part by a grant from . . .").

Viewership studies of C-SPAN and legislative television programming in other states indicate that the California Channel will attract a core audience of viewers who are politically active, well educated and upscale in income. These audiences are often a desirable demographic group for corporations and foundations wanting to increase their visibility, especially if that visibility is linked to a unique and valuable public service such as the California Channel.

Underwriting support would be obtained from as broad a base of support as possible to avoid the conflicts of interest that could arise if only a few large donors supported programming. Moreover, if corporate underwriting were to support only 10 to 15 percent of the budget, it would not become a California Channel mainstay, thus avoiding undue control of program content. Smaller donations would be solicited from individuals and organizations through membership campaigns. While these donors would not be individually acknowledged in program credits, they would be able to obtain a tax deduction for supporting a nonprofit corporation.

A newsletter could be provided to California Channel viewers for an annual subscription fee. It would carry monthly program schedules, background articles on California Channel programming and viewer comments. As with C-SPAN's newsletter, this service could add a small amount of revenue to the Channel's total funding.

*Re-sale of satellite transponder time.* One of the highest expenses of the California Channel is the satellite transponder lease. Assuming that the California Channel is not transmitted 24 hours per day, at least in the early phases of service, the unused hours could be rented at prevailing market rates. Subcarrier services could also be leased for data or cable radio applications. ("Subcarrier" refers to the portion of the video signal which is not received by ordinary television receivers and which can be used to transmit other non-video signals "piggyback.") While not a major source of income, transponder leasing could generate an additional percentage of revenue for the California Channel.

*Facilities rental.* Another source of revenue, also relatively small, would be the rental of the California Channel studio, editing facilities and satellite equipment for video productions and teleconferencing. Being careful to avoid conflict of interest situations, the California Channel could rent its facilities during unused hours.



*News service and sale of selected programming.* Television and radio broadcasters should be given the right to use excerpts from California Channel coverage without charge in their newscasts. Use of longer excerpts—perhaps over three minutes—might be authorized for a small fee. Although modest, these fees might provide the California Channel with an additional source of revenue.

California public television stations have expressed interest in acquiring a weekly legislative news summary if well-produced and not overly expensive. Independent television stations, too, might have an interest in acquiring a weekly news program for a reasonable fee.

*Videotape copies and educational packages.* Additional income could be generated by providing videotape copies of program segments. Public interest groups and lobbyists may want records of testimony and debates on bills they have monitored. Schools might request clips showing how a particular bill progressed through the legislative process or how public policy is formed. As the network matures, more staff could be dedicated to the creation of salable spin-offs such as the development of curriculum packages appropriate for all educational levels.

*Use of college interns.* Staffing comprises a major percentage of the California Channel's ongoing budget. The use of college interns would strengthen the California Channel's labor force at relatively little expense. Capable political science, broadcasting, journalism, law and business majors would gain valuable experience while stretching the Channel's personnel budget.

## **6. A Funding Mix**

A combination of revenue sources should be utilized to support the operations of the California Channel after its initial two years of operation. Cable system license fees, perhaps made more acceptable with the incentive of tax credits, plus underwriting revenue and fees for special services should sustain the California Channel at a reasonable operating level. This study suggests that cable system license fees raise approximately 80% of the budget and that a combination of other sources supply the remaining 20%. The following Table 10.1 indicates the budgets required for minimum, mid- and large-scale operations using the 80/20 percent revenue mix. Cable system license fees are projected at full (100% of all cable systems) and partial participation rates.

## **C. Conclusions: Recommendations for Funding**

While there are several ways to fund a state public affairs television network, this study recommends a dual funding and organizational model with responsibilities and costs divided between the Legislature and the nonprofit California Channel. The Legislature would fund its own video operations and receive the benefits of enhanced monitoring capabilities. It would make its gavel-to-gavel feeds available to the California Channel which would be responsible for distributing the signal to the public via cable systems and other media.

The California Channel would be funded by a mixture of sources, including cable license fees, foundation and corporate underwriting and sales of ancillary services. License fees are expected to support up to 80% of California Channel



operating costs, with underwriting and ancillary services comprising the remaining 20%.

When the network first becomes available, it would be offered at no charge to cable operators. Once it has established itself as a fully operational network, affiliate cable systems would be asked to pay the California Channel a small license fee, perhaps starting at one cent per subscriber per month. This nominal license fee could be implemented at the start of the second full year of operation and would increase to two cents the following year. The cable license fee is expected to cap at approximately three cents per subscriber per month, depending

**Table 10.1**  
**Budget Requirements for California Channel**  
**Annual Operating Expenses**

Budget requirements	System Options		
	Minimum-level system	Mid-level system	Large-scale system
Total estimated annual budget (1)	\$1,336,000	\$2,078,000	\$2,396,000
20% of revenue from a mix of sources	\$267,000	\$416,000	\$479,000
80% of revenue from cable license fees	\$1,069,000	\$1,662,000	\$1,917,000
Cable license fees required to raise 80% of budget (¢/sub./mo.) Participation rate: (2)			
100%	1.8¢	2.8¢	3.2¢
75%	2.4¢	3.8¢	4.2¢
50%	3.7¢	5.7¢	6.3¢

(1) Budget estimates are described in more detail in Chapter 9, "Technical and Budget."

(2) How to read table: If 75% of California cable systems acquire the California Channel, the license fee would need to be 2.4¢ per subscriber per month to raise \$1,069,000 in revenue for a minimum-level system. This is based on an estimate of 5 million cable subscribers in the state.

on the existence of legislative tax credits for cable system support, the number of cable systems that carry the network, the number of cable subscribers in California and overall operating expenses.

This dual organizational model, with funding from a variety of sources, satisfies the key criteria for sound development of the new network. It safeguards against content control by legislative or special interests. It minimizes the potential for biased coverage. And it provides long-term economic stability, immunizing the network from the fluctuations of legislative budget cycles by dividing funding responsibility between the Legislature and a number of outside sources. Once the California Channel is carried by a majority of cable systems in the state, it is expected to generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining.

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## **Chapter 11**

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# **Implementation of the California Channel**

The successful implementation of the California Channel depends on its ability to create a partnership with the Legislature, cable operators and potential funding sources. To accomplish this, the California Channel must build a strong organization and adopt operating guidelines to address the needs of its partners.

In its formation and development stage, the California Channel will obtain a nonprofit tax exemption and assemble a nonpartisan blue-ribbon board of directors. Staff members will begin the process of briefing legislators, cable operators and potential funding sources on the scope of the proposed new public affairs network and the direction of the project. Questions on a wide array of issues—from channel capacity to legislative control—must be addressed to the satisfaction of all parties. Before the California Channel can proceed to the demonstration stage, the Legislature will need to accept the concept of televising its sessions and begin preparing for the installation of cameras in the Capitol.

The next stage, or demonstration phase, will launch the California Channel on a trial basis. The California Channel must raise the necessary funding for the purchase of equipment and lease of satellite time. Channel space for carriage on partially used cable or access channels will need to be negotiated. Both the California Channel and the Legislature must establish operating rules to ensure balanced and objective programming.

The first phase is projected to be accomplished in one year, with the demonstration phase slated for an additional two years. Foundation and corporate funding would be sought for both phases. Thereafter, the network would be expected to achieve self-sufficiency from a variety of funding sources.

## **A. Phase One: Developing the California Channel**

The first year's activities will be devoted to building a sound foundation for the California Channel: creating a nonprofit corporation, convening the board of directors, obtaining foundation and corporate funding and developing a base of support among legislators, cable operators, funders and potential network viewers.

### **1. Organizational Structure**

The California Channel will be responsible for transmitting legislative and other governmental programming around the state, as well as producing additional public affairs programs of its own. It is therefore essential that the organizational structure adopted by the California Channel be designed to maximize the integrity and independence of its operations from outside pressures.

*Nonprofit organizational status.* This report recommends that the California Channel be incorporated as an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt California corporation. By establishing independence from the Legislature and other organizations such as a university or state college it avoids the danger of conflicting priorities. Nonprofit status ensures that revenues are invested in basic operations. It also avoids the commercial pressures over content that typically affect privately-owned television media. Further, Internal Revenue Service classification as a Section 501(c)(3) public charity allows foundations, corporations and individuals to receive a tax deduction for their charitable contributions, a significant incentive for their support of the California Channel.

*Board of directors.* The development of a blue-ribbon board of directors to oversee the California Channel is a critically important task. A distinguished panel of advisors is the key to assuring the Legislature, underwriters, cable operators, the news media and the public that programming will be balanced and objective; funding will be used efficiently and the California Channel will continue to serve the highest interests of the state. The board of directors should include opinion leaders from all sectors of California and be appropriately balanced with women, minorities and residents of urban and rural areas. Directors should include representatives of the print and electronic media, education, labor, business and politics.

*Staffing and administration.* A core staff composed of an executive director, director of development and administrative assistant will carry out phase one operations. These include meeting with potential funding sources, convening the board of directors and the advisory board, discussing the project with legislators and cable operators, commissioning engineering and design studies, obtaining an IRS tax exemption ruling and promoting the California Channel concept as widely as possible throughout the state. Staff will also consult with attorneys and

accountants to ensure that the organizational and financial underpinnings of the project are sound.

*Engineering studies.* Staff will contract for engineering studies prior to construction of the California Channel's master control and studio facilities. A frequency analysis will determine the best site for a satellite uplink. Once the Legislature installs its own video system, staff will also need to determine the most appropriate linkage, microwave or fiber optic transmission, between the Capitol and California Channel headquarters.

## ***2. Promotion and Marketing***

Promotional activities in the formation and development stage include educating legislators, funding sources, cable industry representatives and the public about the new public affairs television network. Activities will include the development of informational brochures, press releases, interviews, demonstrations and media events.

During this time, the California Channel might also create a demonstration videotape to show how the network would operate. A camera crew would tape legislative proceedings, interview legislators and cover other state government proceedings such as Supreme Court oral arguments and state agency administrative hearings. The footage would be edited into a half-hour or hour program to introduce the California Channel concept to legislators, cable operators and potential funders.

## ***3. Cable Operators' Support***

Because cable television is proposed as the major distribution vehicle for the California Channel, staff will meet with cable operators around the state to explain the project and enlist their support. In addition to license fee and other funding alternatives, staff will discuss programming arrangements to ensure that the California Channel is transmitted at times and in program lengths convenient to cable operators. Staff will also discuss satellite distribution options with cable operators to determine which configuration maximizes the potential for cable carriage and, at the same time, keeps satellite expenses as low as possible.

Discussions will be held with representatives of other media as well. Some public television stations, for example, have expressed interest in carrying regular news or roundtable discussion programs. Meetings with public television representatives would focus on the format, scheduling and cost of such programming.

## ***4. Planning for Legislative Coverage***

During phase one, California Channel discussions with legislative leaders will focus on technical, policy and funding considerations. Depending on the Legislature's own progress in installing a video system, the California Channel will need to obtain clearance to transmit legislative video signals from the Capitol to its own headquarters or to obtain access to cover legislative proceedings with its own portable cameras (see phase two discussion of alternative means of coverage, below). California Channel staff will also discuss the potential for indirect



funding support of the network via tax credits and other means with legislative leaders.

## **B. Phase Two: Getting the California Channel Off the Ground**

In the ensuing two-year demonstration phase, the California Channel would hire additional staff, install master control, studio and satellite facilities, widely promote the Channel within the state, negotiate operating procedures with the Legislature and develop and distribute programming to cable systems on a trial-run basis. Phase two operations would be funded primarily from foundation and corporate grants.

### ***1. Equipment Installation and Pilot Project***

Once engineering studies are completed and system designs drafted, the California Channel will install master control and studio facilities near the Capitol. The network's satellite distribution system will be established, requiring the construction of an uplink and the lease of a satellite transponder accessible to cable systems. The construction of some facilities such as a studio and satellite uplink can be deferred by renting them during the first years of operation. When the Legislature begins operating its own video system and the necessary clearances are obtained, the California Channel will install a microwave or optical fiber connection between the Capitol and its master control facility.

Prior to statewide distribution of programming, the California Channel may want to conduct a small-scale pilot project. It could distribute legislative programming to one cable system (perhaps in the Sacramento area) or to several cable systems in a larger metropolitan area such as the Bay Area via telephone trunk line or microwave transmission. Programming could be originated from fixed camera installations in the Legislature or from portable units.

A pilot project would accomplish several goals. The technical systems could be tested without acquiring an expensive satellite system. Programming bugs could be worked out and broadcast quality production achieved before the network is extended throughout the state. And legislators could use this time to become accustomed to cameras in their chambers and assess the impact of video coverage on their proceedings, just as the United States Senate did before installing cameras in its chambers in 1986.

### ***2. An Alternative Start-Up Plan for Legislative Coverage***

During the time that the California Channel study has been conducted, members and staff from both houses of the Legislature have actively explored ways to televise legislative proceedings. Although it would be desirable for the Legislature and the California Channel to install their video systems at the same time, synchronized implementation is not necessarily required.

The California Channel could begin its operations without legislative installation of fixed cameras in the Capitol. Because the Legislature routinely grants clearances to the media for coverage of specific committee hearings and floor debates, the California Channel could seek such clearances and begin its programming on a part-time basis. It would use portable field equipment to tape

selected proceedings for transmission from California Channel headquarters at a later hour. This approach would allow the California Channel to begin operating on a modest test-run basis. It would also allow legislators to assess the quality of coverage and its impact on legislative proceedings before installing permanent cameras. The use of portable equipment is not recommended for long-term legislative coverage, however, because it requires more staff and is more intrusive into floor proceedings than a fixed installation of remote-control cameras.

The operations of the California Channel will be significantly enhanced, however, when the Legislature opens its doors to the permanent installation of cameras in the main chambers, committee rooms and press conference room. Such installations will substantially increase the Channel's ability to provide a wide range of legislative proceedings to the public. The California Channel should therefore begin discussions with legislative leaders at the earliest opportunity to encourage the development of the Legislature's video systems in concert with the California Channel.

### ***3. Programming Development***

The California Channel's initial programming is likely to be modest in scope and will depend on the level of funding and the extent of the Legislature's own video coverage. If programming is initially produced with portable video equipment operated by legislative or California Channel crews, coverage may be limited, possibly consisting of a two-hour evening segment with highlights and lengthy excerpts of the day's proceedings. When the Legislature installs its own video system, programming can expand to include more extensive gavel-to-gavel coverage.

As the California Channel's budget increases, both a daytime segment of live and tape-delayed gavel-to-gavel proceedings and an evening segment of the day's highlights would be transmitted. A news program would be produced once a week and later on a daily basis. Depending on funding, the California Channel would produce other programming such as roundtable discussions and viewer call-in shows. Its camera crews would cover events outside the Capitol including other government proceedings and public affairs conferences. (See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of programming.)

During the demonstration phase, the California Channel would conduct viewer research to fine-tune its programming line-up. Focus groups could review current programming, assess the quality of coverage and offer new programming ideas. Surveys would determine demographic information and viewing patterns of the California Channel audience in order to develop marketing strategies.

### ***4. Rules of Coverage and Programming Guidelines***

Before programming is distributed by the California Channel, operating rules must be agreed upon by all parties involved. The Legislature will need to adopt a set of procedures to ensure that its video coverage of floor proceedings, committee hearings and press conferences is balanced, does not portray legislators in an unfavorable light and minimally affects legislative protocols. The California Channel will establish a set of operating guidelines to ensure that its programming is distributed in an objective and balanced manner. And cable

operators will need to agree on procedures for carrying California Channel programming.

*Legislative procedures.* The debate over televising legislative proceedings typically raises several concerns among legislators. Initially, legislators may worry that their colleagues will grandstand or make excessively long speeches, that coverage will be biased or incomplete or that legislative procedures will be affected. Others may fear that they will not present themselves well on television or that cameras will record seemingly unprofessional behavior such as eating or sleeping in legislative chambers. Of course, members of both parties are concerned about giving the opposition a new platform for reaching the public.

Jurisdictions which provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of their activities generally adopt procedural rules to allay these concerns. Most limit coverage to head-and-shoulders shots of the person recognized to speak, although some permit "roving" cameras to show legislators working or talking on the floor. Some allow split-screen views of two legislators engaged in debate, while others require the camera to be aimed at the Speaker's dais and the members' rostrum. Most legislative bodies prohibit shots of the press, public galleries, legislators' papers or disruptions—in other words, any actions not officially recognized by the presiding officer. And most prohibit the use of video footage in political campaigns. California might follow the example of other state and national legislatures by developing rules of coverage which maximize the public's right to know while preserving the integrity of existing legislative procedures.

*California Channel procedures.* The California Channel will inevitably be required to make editorial decisions in covering the Legislature. When Assembly and Senate floor proceedings or committee hearings occur simultaneously, for example, California Channel staff must determine which to transmit live and which to transmit on a tape-delay basis. With respect to its own programming, California Channel staff must decide which legislative actions to describe in news summaries, what legislators and other public officials to interview, how to balance their appearances and what topics to discuss on roundtable and viewer call-in programs.

Accordingly, the California Channel must adopt guidelines to ensure that its decisions are made in an impartial, balanced and journalistically responsible manner. Its code of operations should include the following provisions:

- The highest programming priority should be live, unedited coverage of government proceedings such as Assembly and Senate floor and committee proceedings.
- When proceedings occur at the same time, the California Channel should transmit one live and tape the others for later transmission, rotating equally between houses and committees.
- Programming must not be used, or made available for use, to promote or oppose the candidacy of any person for elective office.
- Cable operators shall have no power of censorship over programming. Other media outlets such as public and independent television stations

which re-air news summaries or other programs will be required to show them in their entirety without editing.

- Programming shall be made available without charge to other media organizations in excerpts of up to three minutes in connection with bona fide news and public affairs programs, with appropriate credit given to the California Channel and the local cable system.

*Cable carriage procedures.* Although some California cable systems have the capacity to carry the California Channel on a full-time dedicated channel, most will have to fit it into a channel that is partially filled with other programming. Municipal access channels, for example, are used by local governments to cover city council meetings and other municipal activities but are rarely completely filled with programming. Ground rules will determine how, when and under what circumstances cable operators and municipal access administrators will be able to insert California Channel programming into such partially-used channels.

During C-SPAN's early years of operation, for example, it encouraged cable operators to carry its entire programming intact and prohibited "cherry picking" (carrying only selected programs). Aware of channel limitations, however, C-SPAN allowed some operators to carry a portion of its programming on a shared channel with other programming, as long as the operator carried the same C-SPAN segment regularly, for example, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (New C-SPAN license agreements prohibit both cherry picking and channel sharing.)

The California Channel might negotiate similar carriage rules with participating cable operators. Cable systems would be encouraged to carry the entire California Channel signal intact. Those unable to do so would be allowed to carry program segments at regular and pre-defined times of day. Cable viewers at least would have the certainty of knowing the specific times of day or night when the California Channel would be regularly available.

### ***5. Development of Ancillary Services***

During phase two, the California Channel would begin to market its primary and ancillary services to appropriate organizations, in part to lay the groundwork for additional sources of income. Although commercial television and radio stations could use short excerpts from the California Channel without charge to enhance their own legislative coverage, use of longer clips might be offered for a fee. Public broadcast stations might be allowed to retransmit entire segments of legislative programming distributed by the California Channel or use its news and analysis programming to fill shorter program slots. Other satellite users could sublease unused satellite time. Video tapes of selected proceedings could be provided to educational institutions for instructional purposes.

### ***6. Full-Scale Marketing and Educational Efforts***

The success of the California Channel will depend heavily on the goodwill and cooperation of many groups. Strong educational and marketing efforts are therefore essential to reach legislators and other state government officials, cable operators, sponsors and potential viewers.



*Legislators and other government officials.* California Channel staff would provide tours, distribute newsletters and conduct briefings and receptions in order to maintain close contact with government leaders. The California Channel would promote the installation of television monitors in public places, such as the rotunda of the Capitol, lunch rooms, public waiting areas and busy hallway locations in other Capitol complex buildings.

*Cable operators.* Although the California Channel initially will be offered to cable systems at no charge, operators will still need information to decide whether the network is of value to them and their viewers. Cable operators would be invited to briefings in Sacramento, receive regular newsletters and have their support acknowledged in trade advertisements and letters of appreciation to their local franchising authorities and legislators. The goal would be to obtain carriage on at least 50% of all cable systems in the state during the start-up period.

*Funding sources.* Potential underwriters would also receive information about the California Channel, with particular emphasis on direct personal contacts with corporate and foundation decision-makers, trade advertising and direct mail marketing. The California Channel staff will include a director of development responsible for generating and managing underwriting support.

*Potential viewers.* Potential California Channel viewers would be informed about the California Channel through a number of avenues: "bill stuffers" in their monthly cable bills, promotional messages on other cable channels, print advertising in journals, magazines and newsletters targeted to the demographic groups most likely to be California Channel viewers and advertisements in other media. Visitors to the Capitol would be introduced to the service and encouraged to spread the word back home. Staff would make presentations to schools, conferences and community groups. The new public affairs television network would be the subject of a variety of news events such as press conferences, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the inauguration of Capitol and California Channel facilities, festivities honoring the first cable systems to sign up and the first day of live coverage.

### **C. Timetable for Development**

The development of the California Channel from a fledgling operation to a full-scale public affairs cable television network involves a two-phase implementation process over three years—a year-long organizational development phase followed by a two-year trial-run period. By the fourth year, the California Channel should be fully operational. Table 11.1 summarizes implementation plans.

### **D. Conclusion**

A new public affairs channel for the state of California is timely and needed. As the problems confronting the state multiply and public policy questions become more complex, the channels of communication between the people and their elected representatives must be strengthened. Implementation of the California Channel will improve the efficiency of state government, increase public confidence in elected officials and take a major step toward bringing California's system of politics and communications into the twenty-first century.



**Table 11.1**  
**California Channel Timetable**

<b>Year one</b>	<b>Phase one: development of nonprofit corporation</b>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Build an administratively and financially sound organizational structure.</li> <li>b. Raise sufficient funds for implementation of phase two.</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Foundation and corporate grants.</li> </ul>
Key tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Hire core staff of executive director, director of development and administrative support.</li> <li>b. Convene board of directors and advisory board; build organizational structure.</li> <li>c. Obtain legislative clearances to cover proceedings and commitments from cable operators to carry the network.</li> <li>d. Raise funds from foundations and corporations.</li> <li>e. Conduct engineering studies.</li> </ul>
<b>Years two and three</b>	<b>Phase two: network development and demonstration</b>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Obtain carriage by at least 50% of California cable systems by the end of year two, 75% by year three.</li> <li>b. Provide at least four hours per day coverage of legislative proceedings by end of year two and at least eight hours per day by end of year three.</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Foundation and corporate grants.</li> <li>b. Nominal cable license fee of one cent per subscriber per month by year three.</li> </ul>
Key tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Hire staff for technical, programming and administrative functions.</li> <li>b. Market and promote channel.</li> <li>c. Obtain additional commitments from cable operators to carry the network.</li> <li>d. Run pilot project with limited schedule for local or regional distribution of programming.</li> <li>e. Purchase and install video and satellite equipment; establish satellite network by installing uplink and leasing transponder.</li> <li>f. Distribute network statewide after successful completion of pilot project.</li> </ul>

Continued

**Table 11.1, continued**  
**California Channel Timetable**

<b>Years four and onward</b>	<b>Fully operational network</b>
<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Become self-supporting from cable license fees and mix of other revenue sources.</li> <li>b. Expand programming schedule to at least 12 hours per day of live and tape-delayed coverage.</li> <li>c. Increase number of cable affiliates.</li> <li>d. Increase revenue from ancillary services and underwriting.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Obtain 80% of operating budget from cable license fees at an estimated three cents per subscriber per month.</li> <li>b. Raise 20% of operating budget from mix of foundation and corporate underwriting plus ancillary services.</li> </ul>
<b>Key tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop additional programming through increased in-house production by California Channel staff.</li> <li>b. Expand coverage beyond legislative proceedings to include executive and judicial branch hearings and events, public affairs-related conferences and selected city council and county board of supervisors meetings on topics of broad interest.</li> </ul>

## **PART IV**

# **Appendices**



## **Appendix A**

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# **Consultants and Assistants**

The California Channel project is the collaboration of hundreds of individuals who generously gave their time and talents to the study. The authors acknowledge and thank them for their valuable contributions and apologize for any inadvertent omissions. While the information in this report comprises the advice and assistance of many individuals, responsibility for all findings, conclusions and recommendations rests with the authors.

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## **Appendix B**

# **Summary of Public Opinion Poll Questions**

Poll conducted by San Francisco State University Public Research Institute for the California Channel project, November–December 1987<sup>1</sup>

1. Thinking about your regular news sources, how much information do you get about California government and elected officials—all the news you want, most of what you want, some of what you want, or none of what you want?

16%	all
29%	most
45%	some
9%	none
2%	don't know, not sure

54% get just some or none of the state government news they want.

There is a proposal to start a public television or cable TV channel that would televise information on California government and elected officials. For example, programs on this new channel would include live coverage of debates in the Assembly and Senate, press conferences, and in-depth news and talk shows on policy issues.

2. How interested would you be in seeing this new channel become part of your public television or cable TV system?

41%	very interested
33%	somewhat interested
15%	slightly interested
10%	not interested
1%	dk

74%, or three-fourths, show interest in the proposed channel.



3. If this channel were available on your public TV or cable TV, how often do you think you would watch it?

15% every day  
 54% once/week  
 15% once/month  
 8% hardly ever  
 7% never  
 2% dk

69%, or nearly 7 in 10, would watch it every day or once a week.

4. Of the following types of programs that might be broadcast on the proposed channel, tell me if you would be very interested, somewhat interested, slightly interested, or not at all interested in viewing it.

Live coverage of debates in the legislature:

26% very  
 39% somewhat  
 18% slightly  
 17% not

In-depth analysis of important issues

54% very  
 30% somewhat  
 10% slightly  
 5% not

Educational programs on how California government works

46% very  
 32% somewhat  
 13% slightly  
 9% not

Viewer call-in shows

19% very  
 29% somewhat  
 18% slightly  
 32% not  
 1% dk

Press conferences

24% very  
 38% somewhat  
 18% slightly  
 20% not  
 1% dk

News summaries

46% very  
 36% somewhat  
 11% slightly  
 7% not

The programming types listed in order of *most* interest are as follows. The percentage figures indicate those who are "very interested."

1. analysis of issues 54%
2. news summaries 46%
3. educational programs 46%  
on how government works
4. live coverage of debates 26%
5. press conferences 24%
6. viewer call-in shows 19%

The programming types listed in order of *least* interest are as follows. The percentage figures indicate "not interested."

1. viewer call-in shows 32%
2. press conferences 20%
3. live coverage of debates 17%
4. educational programs 9%  
on how government works
5. news summaries 7%
6. analysis of issues 5%

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>5. Is cable TV available in your area?</p> <p>88% yes</p> <p>12% no</p> <p>1% not sure, don't know</p> | <p>6. Do you subscribe to cable TV?</p> <p>57% yes</p> <p>31% cable available, but<br/>do not subscribe</p> <p>12% cable not available</p> |
|---|--|

- 7 Question asked of those who do not subscribe: If the new channel is started on cable TV, do you think you would be more likely to subscribe to cable TV service? (n=162)

- 23% yes
- 17% maybe
- 59% no
- 1% dk

Nearly 1 in 4 non-subscribers state they are likely to subscribe to the proposed channel. The combined "yes" and "maybe" responses show that four in ten respondents are likely to subscribe to cable if the proposed channel were available.

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone interviews were conducted by San Francisco State University Public Research Institute of 515 adults in Nov.-Dec. 1987. Respondents were selected randomly and in proportion to the population of each county in California. Based on a sample of this size, there is 95% assurance that the sample percentages fall within plus or minus 6% of the true values for the California adult population as a whole.



## **Appendix C**

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# **California Channel Focus Group Findings**

The California Channel study conducted eight focus groups in four California cities—Fresno, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego—between August 15 and October 22, 1987.<sup>1</sup> The 51 focus group participants discussed a variety of issues related to the creation of a new statewide public affairs television channel: the adequacy of their current news sources on state political and public affairs, programming format preferences, expected viewing patterns and suggestions for California Channel funding. (The methodology used to conduct these focus groups is described in the Note at the end of this Appendix.)

Several themes emerged from the wide range of opinions voiced by participants:

- Information from existing media sources on California political and public affairs is inadequate.
- Focus group participants are interested in public affairs, but they are discouraged by the biased information they presently obtain through the traditional media.
- The new channel's programming should cover the issues clearly and without bias. Information should be presented so that all citizens can understand and make their own decisions about state politics.
- Regardless of how much time participants would watch the proposed channel, it should exist as a reference source and as a means to provide access to their elected representatives.

### **A. Adequacy of Current News Sources**

Although focus group participants gave high marks to several sources of national news, they indicated that information on the state level is inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> Focus groups were conducted fall 1987 by Gail Portrey, Annenberg School of Communications.

"Why is the state so secondary?" asked Arlene (Bay Area). "Second page, third page—never on the first." Marl (Los Angeles) observed, "In Los Angeles, we get as good news coverage as there is in the world. But not enough of it is state focused. That's the one place where we're lacking."

For state news sources, participants favored the *Los Angeles Times* in all geographic regions where focus groups were held. The *San Francisco Chronicle* was criticized by participants in both northern and southern California for providing inadequate coverage of state political and public affairs issues. Local television station news programs were generally given low marks. Participants characterized television news programs as glossy, sensational and geared primarily toward increasing ratings points.

For national news, CNN (the Cable News Network) was a consistent favorite for an all-news format. Ted Koppel's "Nightline" (ABC) was popular in all groups for the roundtable discussion format. The "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" (PBS), "60 Minutes" (CBS) and "20/20" (ABC) were frequently mentioned as other regularly watched news programs. Although radio was not widely discussed in focus groups, participants rated National Public Radio (NPR) programming highly.

Half of the participants occasionally watched C-SPAN, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network. (C-SPAN televises gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the United States House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and supplements this coverage with other political affairs programming which it produces.) Participants who watched C-SPAN regularly considered themselves political opinion leaders. They felt strongly attached to the network, and some C-SPAN viewers chastised the others for not watching more frequently. Participants who were marginally aware of C-SPAN said they would be more inclined to watch or tape the programming if they knew in advance that an issue of interest to them was to be covered.

## **B. Programming Preferences**

All participants watched a 16-minute videotape containing examples of seven programming formats from other states that provide legislative television coverage. The videotape elicited a wide variety of responses on programming formats, the content of news coverage and production values.

### **1. Program Formats**

The seven program types discussed by participants, listed in order of preference, were:

- 1) issue coverage (single issue, documentary-style programming);
- 2) news summaries (similar in format to network news with brief summaries of various issues);
- 3) educational specials (single topic programs on the process of government, such as how a bill becomes law);
- 4) viewer call-in shows (interview programs in which viewers have telephone contact with the panelists);



- 5) gavel-to-gavel coverage (unedited coverage of legislative proceedings);
- 6) roundtable discussions (debate of issues among panelists representing a variety of viewpoints);
- 7) press conferences (unedited coverage of presentations made by government officials to reporters).

1) *Issue coverage.* Participants ranked issue coverage first among all the programming formats they evaluated. They said it gave them the opportunity to make up their own minds on issues, especially when all viewpoints were adequately covered. They thought this format was particularly effective for covering complex issues in a nonbiased manner. Participants mentioned several current statewide issues that could be well-handled by this format—the lottery, the recent bottle law, the homeless and water problems. (Participants did not discuss the potential for the producer of issue-oriented documentaries to bias coverage through production techniques and control of content.)

Some participants criticized this format for not generating solutions to problems. They recommended that the issue coverage format be combined with roundtable discussions and viewer call-ins. Clive (Los Angeles) suggested, “It would be ideal if you could . . . bring in two members of the Senate and have an open discussion of the problem—why they can’t solve the problem. You would get two people you had elected making a commitment somewhere along the line.”

2) *News formats.* Participants rated the news summary second and preferred it for keeping them up to date on a variety of issues. Greg’s (Fresno) comments represent the consensus. “I prefer the [news] summary because it gives details but doesn’t draw it out. It has a nice mix.”

On the other hand, participants were critical of the format for tending to gloss over important details. They believed it to be less effective in dealing with complex issues. Referring to a news story from the focus group videotape on a bill dealing with missing children, Jan (Bay Area) said, “They talk about the bill too fast. . . . I want to know what the bill number is, who I could possibly call, write or some information on how to follow up.” Lynn (Los Angeles) echoed Jan’s concern. “Another ten seconds worth of talk would have given more data and comments. [It] lacked historical context. I wanted to know why missing children was an issue at this time.”

Participants stressed the importance of a skilled and impartial commentator and were wary of the potential for bias to creep into news presentations. Several said they preferred documentary style issue coverage to a news summary format because of the potential for the commentator to bias the news.

Several participants suggested that the news format would be ideal as a weekly hour-long or a daily thirty-minute program. They recommended that news summaries be combined with roundtable discussions, similar to “Washington Week in Review” and the “MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour.”

3) *Educational specials.* Programs on educational topics were ranked third. Participants saw brief video excerpts on a day in the life of a legislator, how a bill becomes law and an historical view of how one state’s senate had changed over

the years. Some expressed frustration at not knowing how the process of California's government works and saw this type of programming as a valuable antidote. Others mentioned they would tend to watch this type of programming before elections or before making a trip to Sacramento to visit the Capitol. Said Ruth (Bay Area), "[Government is] so damned intimidating, purposefully. They set out to say, 'this is above you,' and look down on people. It would make it more comfortable if you saw it and knew what was going on when you got there."

4) *Viewer call-in programs.* Viewer call-in programs were popular with those who valued the opportunity to interact personally with legislators. Said Michelle (Los Angeles), "I like it because the viewer is given a chance to speak. . . . We're the people that keep it going and they should give us a chance." Several participants suggested that viewer call-in programs would be more effective as part of other formats—roundtable discussions, news summaries or issue coverage. Participants noted the importance of the moderator in channeling the calls to the proper panelist and keeping speakers (both callers and panelists) on the topic. They mentioned Larry King as a good moderator of viewer call-in programs.

Viewer call-in programs appeared less popular among the more politically informed participants, who tended to feel that issues got lost in "double-talk" or "off-the-wall" questions. Participants who were less informed on political issues seemed more interested in call-in programs. Because of the small focus group sample size, this observation would need further research for clarification.

5) *Gavel-to-gavel coverage.* The gavel-to-gavel programming format was controversial among participants and elicited a wide variety of opinions. On the one hand, participants realized its importance as an educational tool and a means to cover particularly controversial issues in a nonbiased manner (for example, the Iran-Contra hearings which had recently been aired on television and radio). On the other hand, participants said they would not watch gavel-to-gavel programming regularly because they cannot spare the long segments of time necessary to follow the process and find many parts of the coverage uninteresting. Said Jan (Bay Area), "I would certainly [prefer] to have a summary, because . . . you can sit there and they can drag on forever. It's hard to distill the information. . . . Who has the time to sit around?" Jim (San Diego) was thankful for remote control so he could skip over this type of programming. "I'd rather read it in capsule in the news. It's interfering with . . . football."

When referring to C-SPAN, participants expressed frustration at not knowing what is going on when they tune in to legislative proceedings. Said Elizabeth (Bay Area), "I think it's just too difficult to follow. . . . Usually they always have some document that they are looking at. We have no idea what this document is . . . and they don't read it." Participants recommended adding graphics to the screen that would list the most important information about the issue being debated or having a commentator's voice-over explain what was going on. Participants also expressed the need for better written programming materials to be provided by the cable company or the network. Many said if they knew in advance about a particular issue or something that had direct impact on their tax dollars or their region, they would be more likely to watch or tape the programming.

Participants valued gavel-to-gavel programming as a source of impartial coverage. They felt it gives viewers a chance to see their representatives at work. Consequently, legislators are made more accountable for their actions. Don (Los Angeles) stressed the ability of gavel-to-gavel coverage to open up the governmental process. "With [Senator Joe] McCarthy, when he was exposed, he collapsed. The people were able to make better informed decisions. . . . He became a hero for awhile, but everybody saw through that."

Participants ranked gavel-to-gavel coverage highly as an educational tool. Some thought it should be available in schools, "so children can learn . . . how the system works by seeing, instead of just reading about it" (Greg, Fresno). While focus group participants admitted they would not watch frequently, many said gavel-to-gavel programming should be available as a resource to be viewed when particular issues of interest arise. Many recommended that committee hearings be covered, especially the most important debates.

6) *Roundtable discussions.* Although the roundtable discussion was not ranked highly by participants, the video segment they viewed had poor production values. Participants may have reacted as much to the program's quality as they did to the format itself. In general, when participants discussed this format, they felt it should be included as a part of other types of programming such as news summaries and viewer-call ins—formats ranked higher by participants. Many suggested a format like the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour," which would devote five to ten minutes to a news summary and then discuss one or two issues with people having different viewpoints for the remaining 50 minutes.

Participants noted the importance of the moderator as the key to making panel discussions appeal to viewers. "You've got to have a superb host. The guy who is running it has got to . . . know what he's talking about and be able to draw out from the people the type of information he knows the people want," said Clive (Los Angeles).

7) *Press conferences.* Press conferences were the least-favored and least-discussed type of programming. Participants felt the format to be more effective if summarized in news programs. Said Clive (Los Angeles), "You could sit and watch for an hour and pick up two minutes of interesting material." Additionally, press conferences were disliked because participants felt the speaker had a set agenda and that reporters tended to ask repetitive questions. Laura (San Diego) expressed the opinion of many by stating, "It's more important that they have [press conferences] than that we watch them."

Marl (Los Angeles), a minority of one, was adamant about the need for televised press conferences. "That's the one thing that's wrong with this country. People would rather watch 'Dallas' than watch a news conference. I don't think they have enough press conferences. . . . This is a democracy. You are supposed to report to the people. If you don't insist on a report from your government, after awhile, you are going to have government in secrecy."

## **2. *The Ideal Public Affairs Channel***

Focus group participants offered their suggestions on the ideal state public affairs channel. Their responses are summarized below:

*Programming mix.* Suggestions for the ideal programming mix, borrowed liberally from cable television and the networks, included:

- a regular issue coverage program similar to “60 Minutes;”
- a “Nightline” roundtable format, with a skilled moderator, articulate spokespersons and high officials, combined with viewer call-ins;
- hourly news updates, like CNN;
- a weekly 60-minute or daily 30-minute news program;
- occasional educational specials;
- selected gavel-to-gavel coverage of important issues.

*Universal accessibility.* Participants felt the channel should be available to as wide a segment of the population as possible. “If you’re not going to reach a certain segment because they can’t afford it, that is a problem” (Mildred, Bay Area). Lynn (Los Angeles), too, stressed universal accessibility. “The dichotomy between the haves and have nots in our society is further and further distanced. I would like it available to everyone.”

*Convenience.* Participants who worked during the day stressed that programming should be available during the evening hours. They were frustrated, for example, at not being able to see the Iran-Contra hearings when they got home from work. Several stated they would tape selected programs to watch at a more convenient time if they had adequate program schedules.

*On-air explanatory messages and program schedules.* When gavel-to-gavel proceedings are aired, numerous on-screen explanatory messages (character-generated) should be provided to enable viewers to follow the action. Laura (San Diego) suggested providing “some way for people to get involved. Give an address or number where people can call.”

People are busy and need to know well in advance what will be on the channel. Participants stressed the importance of programming guides, enabling them to pick and choose what to watch—or what to tape and watch later on their VCRs.

*Nonbiased coverage.* Participants were adamant about the necessity of impartial coverage. They liked gavel-to-gavel coverage because it is not biased—something they could watch and make up their own minds. This exchange between Mike and Joy (Bay Area) illustrates why some of the participants preferred gavel-to-gavel coverage over other programming formats.

Mike: Gavel-to-gavel would work real well if there were programming directors who would decide what is to be edited out and what is to be kept in.

Joy: I was thinking about the Gettysburg address . . . the fact that if we had TV that day, we would have televised the other speech (I don’t remember who made it) and would have missed [Lincoln’s] because Lincoln was not a particularly good speaker. I know I have preferences, but I would not like to reduce the scope of what is covered.

When discussing other programming formats—news summaries, roundtable discussions, viewer call-in shows—participants noted that the commentator or moderator was the key to balanced coverage. Participants



stressed that these individuals must be able to present issues clearly and include all relevant viewpoints.

*Preference for coverage of locally relevant issues.* Participants expressed more of an interest in watching the proposed channel if local and regional issues were covered. Said Jan (Bay Area), "I'd be more inclined to watch a California channel than I would be to watch C-SPAN, and *most* interested in watching my local city council because what they do directly impacts on me."

Fresno participants, in particular, were concerned that their area would be eclipsed by the more populous areas of the state unless regional coverage was stressed. Their concerns were borne out when participants in other cities noted that unless an issue in another locale had a direct impact on them, they would not be interested in knowing about it. For example, a story on toxic pesticides in Fresno-grown grocery produce would be of interest elsewhere in the state, whereas an agricultural issue of sole concern to persons in Fresno would not.

Some participants suggested that the channel have a balanced mix of local and statewide issues. This is especially important to participants from less populous areas like Fresno which traditionally have been slighted by the media. And participants recommended that the new channel's marketing efforts be directed toward developing programming guides and advertising campaigns to inform the public of the relevance of programming to their specific interests.

*Drawing younger viewers to the channel.* Participants thought it important to get children and young adults interested in the channel. Members of this age group need to be familiar with government so they can understand its relevance to their lives and learn to participate in the democratic process.

Participants indicated, however, that attracting younger viewers to the channel would be difficult. Lynn (Los Angeles) attributed their lack of interest in political affairs to the "glitzy, gimmicky" world children have grown up in. One participant even suggested that political programming targeted at young viewers be hosted by Max Headroom or "Sesame Street" characters to grab their attention.

Several participants commented that the young adult market (ages 18 to 30) would be particularly difficult to attract because of deep-seated apathy toward government. Explained Paul, age 25 (Los Angeles), "I grew up seeing the failures of Vietnam on my screen. Then I saw the failures of my government in Watergate, the failure of our policies in Iran-Contragate. This is far out, but when you are talking about fun for 18 to 20 year olds . . . they have been desensitized to government on TV."

Several participants suggested that the best way to interest young people in the democratic process is to bring the California Channel into the classroom and start educating children at an early age. "Get it into the elementary level and let them see what's going on," suggested Brian (Fresno). "When I took government classes, we talked about the government, but I had no idea. . . . You know the words . . . but when you can actually see it, it sinks in."

*Importance of high production values.* High production values was consistently mentioned as a necessary ingredient in each programming format. Participants did not want to see "slick" programming, but at the same time would



not watch programming that seemed "amateurish." They were critical of programming consisting solely of "talking heads." Said Eli (Bay Area), "If it's going to be visual, then they should make use of all the visuals." "Cheesy" graphics and awkward camera work were also criticized. Clearly, these Californians are accustomed to high quality video productions and were distracted when the programming excerpts they viewed on videotape did not meet their expectations. They said they would not be inclined to watch poorly produced programming.

*Creative programming suggestions.* Focus groups participants offered several creative programming suggestions. Laura (San Diego) saw the California Channel as a way to involve citizens in the governance process. She recommended that legislators' names and addresses, along with bill information, be provided on the screen. Several other participants also asked for extensive text messages to supplement live legislative coverage. Their ideas suggest the use of teletext signals on the proposed new channel—when this technology becomes more widely available.

David (San Diego) was interested in using the channel for more immediate interaction with the legislative process. "Maybe we're coming to a point in our electronic age where the person who is watching can send a vote to send his point of view. . . . If you could get something like this going with public affairs, I think you would have a hot item."

Teleconferencing was suggested as a way to enable citizens far from Sacramento to participate in committee and agency hearings. Lois (San Diego) mentioned that her son, a commercial fisherman, had to travel a long distance to attend a Fish and Game Department hearing in Sacramento. "Too bad if you live in San Diego," she said. "You have to pay your way there. . . . If it's 3:00 o'clock and you have to catch a plane and they haven't heard you, too bad. . . . A family who had fishing licenses for generations couldn't get in to renew them . . . because they were caught out somewhere. Their income was cut."

### **C. Preferences for Funding a New Public Affairs Channel**

Participants discussed several methods for funding the proposed channel. These included increasing the monthly cable bill by five cents, adding an optional or mandatory tax to each individual's state tax return and funding the new channel with corporation donations and viewer contributions similar to the public television (PBS) model. This portion of the focus group sessions only cursorily explored funding options. The participants expressed no clear-cut preferences for funding the new channel, although they had many strong opinions on what would *not* work.

*Five cents extra on each cable bill.* About half the participants who discussed this option favored a higher cable bill. Said Marl (Los Angeles), "We ought to be interested enough in our government to be willing to pay for information." The other half objected to higher cable bills. Their responses were similar to Clive's (Los Angeles). "If they're not going to watch, why should they pay the money?" And Lance (Los Angeles) was even more adamant. "No matter if it was one cent,

if you tell the subscribers you are going to put more on the bill, they are already charged enough.”

*State tax initiative.* Most participants objected to a new optional or mandatory state tax. They felt a tax would be unfair to the many people who would not have access to the proposed channel because they cannot afford to subscribe to cable or who do not have cable available in their area. Others felt this approach would give too much control to the Legislature, and the public would have less to say about what was on the channel. If the channel were guaranteed to be used in the schools for educational purposes, some felt that an optional tax check-off would be acceptable.

*Viewer contributions and corporate underwriting.* Most participants thought that funding through viewer donations would be difficult to obtain. They were also leery of private corporate underwriting. Said Mildred (Bay Area), “I would definitely want to know how it is funded—by whom—and I’d like to make sure it was not hostage to any particular interest group.”

*Creative funding ideas.* Additional funding ideas included offering cable companies a tax credit for carrying the channel and making selected programs available for rent in video stores or libraries for a small fee.

#### **D. Are Californians Interested in a State Public Affairs Channel?**

Most participants expressed interest in public affairs but indicated a number of barriers to their being adequately informed. Several resented what they saw as bias in present news sources. They were not disinterested in public affairs as such. But, at the same time, they did not have a real trust in existing news sources and did not know where to look for more balanced news coverage.

Some participants indicated they were disinterested in state political news because they did not understand the process of government. Those who were familiar with government were more inclined to watch a state public affairs channel.

In every focus group, at least one individual emphasized that busy schedules made it difficult to stay informed about politics. They did say, however, that they *would* find the time to tune in to programming on locally relevant topics and controversial issues. The Iran-Contra hearings were a case in point. Said Ginny (San Diego), who was not particularly interested in political programming, “[We watched] all the [Iran-Contra] hearings, and when we were not at home my husband taped them.”

Most participants indicated they would watch the channel a few hours a week. Their viewing patterns would depend primarily on the relevance of the topic to their interests and their ability to be informed about program content and time schedules. Viewing would also hinge on the quality of productions, the skill of commentators and moderators, the balance of issue presentations and, in the case of gavel-to-gavel coverage, the adequacy of on-screen explanatory messages.

Focus group participants—even those least supportive of a state public affairs channel—were unanimously positive about the need for the channel, even if it did not attract large numbers of viewers. They saw it as a reference source to be used

selectively to find out more about specific issues. Said Lisa (Fresno), "[It would be] good alternative programming. If you really wanted to know what was going on or if you felt lacking in [a particular] area, it would be real nice to turn it on and maybe learn a little more on the state." Even Jim (San Diego), who had been otherwise critical of the proposed channel, said, "This is an information source you may want to find out about sometime or another. So, having it is a good idea." Sheila (Los Angeles) said, "Even if I didn't have time to watch, I'd like the feeling that *someone* was watching [the Legislature]."

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### Focus Groups Methodology Note

Focus groups are used to gather qualitative information from potential consumers when developing and marketing new products and services—in this case, the California Channel, a state public affairs television network. Although focus groups cannot replace public opinion surveys, which sample a large number of respondents, they can elicit in-depth reactions to a new product from a variety of individuals. Groups usually consist of six to twelve persons and are convened for one to two hours, allowing ample opportunity for participants to provide in-depth opinions in a relaxed environment.

Participants in the California Channel focus groups were recruited by telephone in four California cities—Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco. Although a wide variety of participants was sought, the one criterion for participation was cable subscribership. Cable subscribers were recruited from a variety of sources, including cable companies' subscriber lists and newspaper advertisements.

In all, 51 persons participated in eight focus groups, averaging six participants per group. The number of participants per city was: Bay Area, 12; Fresno, 11; Los Angeles, 11; San Diego, 17. All groups were facilitated by the same person. Sessions were tape recorded to allow for more comprehensive analysis, and participants were informed that they were being audio taped.

Each session followed an established format and lasted from one and one-half to two hours depending on the size of the group.

1. *Introduction*

The facilitator explained the purpose of the session, and all participants were introduced.

2. *Assessment of current news sources*

Participants discussed the adequacy of the news sources they currently use for political and public affairs. They listed the best and worst types of news sources from recent experience on a survey form.

3. *Videotape of examples of state legislative television programming*

Participants watched a 16-minute video containing seven program formats from several other states—gavel-to-gavel, news summary, roundtable discussion, panel discussion with viewer call-ins, press conference, in-depth issue coverage (mini-documentary) and educational programs (for example, how a bill becomes law). Participants discussed these formats and ranked their preferences on a survey form.

4. *Discussion of funding preferences*

Participants evaluated several funding options.

5. *Wrap-up*

Participants were given the opportunity to introduce new issues or elaborate on topics that had not been adequately covered.

## Appendix D

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# Media Analysis Categories

The media analysis, described in Chapter 2, monitored news of television, radio and newspapers in five California cities for eight days during the final three weeks of the 1987 legislative session. Television and radio newscasts were categorized according to the following definitions:<sup>1</sup>

<b>Local</b>	Stories emanating from the city of broadcast origin and its neighboring areas, focusing on local interest.
<b>State</b>	Stories taking place within California, emanating from locations other than the city of broadcast; stories emanating from city of broadcast involving statewide issues.
<b>National</b>	Stories originating anywhere in the United States, whether or not national issues are involved; stories originating in California involving national issues.
<b>International</b>	Stories on issues originating outside the United States.
<b>Sports</b>	Segment of newscast which focuses on sports news, usually multi-locale oriented.
<b>Weather</b>	Segment of newscast which focuses on weather reports, usually multi-locale oriented.
<b>Other</b>	Non-locale specific: stories of general interest in which the locale is irrelevant or is not mentioned; examples are health, consumer issues and entertainment news.
<b>Advertisements</b>	Commercial segments; includes paid advertising, public service announcements and station self-promotion.
<b>Lead-ins</b>	Introduction to the newscast or an announcement of headlines and upcoming stories, either for the same or a following broadcast; newscast sign-off.

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<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Nancy Tack, Annenberg School of Communications, fall 1987.

The locale-specific category of state issues was further coded as follows:

<b>Legislative</b>	Legislation enacted, pending or proposed by governing bodies and/or leaders of cities, counties, states or nations; actions by government leaders concerning legislation; other news about legislative leaders; hearings conducted by legislative bodies; ballot initiatives. Example of story coded as State—Legislative: California State Assembly passes teen abortion bill.
<b>Other Government/ Non-Legislative</b>	Decisions or actions made by government bodies other than legislatures—agencies, councils, boards, commissions and courts, or members of these bodies as story's focus. Example of story coded as State—Other Government: State Department of Food and Agriculture studies pet flea spray.
<b>Public Affairs</b>	Non-government related stories of interest to a large segment of the population that give information, analyze social issues or otherwise are concerned with the public welfare. Example of story coded as State—Public Affairs: Issues involving the Catholic Church and the Pope during his September 1987 visit to California.
<b>Other</b>	Stories that do not fit the above subcategories. Example of story coded as State—Other: A sensational murder case involving a Fresno man that received statewide attention.



## **Appendix E**

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# **Sample California Channel Program Weeks**

Two sample program schedules are outlined below, based on actual legislative events during the weeks of June 29–July 5, 1986, and March 1–7, 1987.

The programming is a creative use of what happened during those time periods, derived from actual events. The floor debates and committee hearings on specific bills noted in the program schedules are based on fact. No interviews and panel discussions with legislative leaders actually took place, however, but might have occurred if the California Channel were in operation.

**Sample A**  
**California Channel Program Schedule:**  
**Derived from Proceedings and Events**  
**the Week of March 1-7, 1987<sup>1</sup>**

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 1987
9:00 a.m.	Interview (repeat) J. S. Taub on the state's ability to care for mentally ill children.	
10:00 a.m.	Interview (repeat) Karin Hsiao, reporter for the <i>California Journal</i> , on toxic waste.	
11:00 a.m.	Roundtable discussion (repeat) Robert Schmidt, Capitol correspondent for the <i>Long Beach Press-Telegram</i> , moderates a discussion about the effects of Paul Gann's 1979 <b>Proposition 4</b> , which limits government spending.	
Noon	Committee meetings (repeat) Selected hearings from previous week.	
4:00 p.m.	Discussion of issues (repeat) Assemblymembers Costa and McClintock debate the MediCal issue.	
5:00 p.m.	"California Week in Review" (repeat from Friday p.m.) Journalists' roundtable discussing the week's politics, hosted by Bob Fairbanks of the <i>Daily Recorder</i> .	
6:00 p.m.	"Capitol Scene" (repeat) The <i>Sacramento Bee</i> 's political columnist, Dan Walters, discusses the issue of political action committees (PACs) with a slate of invited guests.	
7:00 p.m.	Feature: "Political Action Primer" (repeat) A step-by-step guide to understanding the legislative process and making your views known to legislators.	
8:00 p.m.	Feature: "Legislator in Focus" (repeat) This week, Tom Hannigan, Assembly Majority Leader.	
9:00 p.m.	Programming repeats from 9:00 p.m.-9:00 a.m.	

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	MONDAY, MARCH 2, 1987
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9:00 a.m.	Interview (live) Richard Zeiger of the <i>California Journal</i> , on the future of the Democratic party.	
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<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Peter Vestal, Annenberg School of Communications, March 1987.

- 10:00 a.m.**    **Assembly session** (live)  
**Resignation** received of Assembly Member **Molina**.  
 SB 160 (Roberti) Restores **MediCal** cuts.
- 1:00 p.m.**    **Press conference** (live)  
 Senator John **Garamendi** on the recent “superconductor” proposals.
- 2:00 p.m.**    **Roundtable discussion**  
 Claudia **Buck**, Capitol reporter for the *Sacramento Bee* hosts an informal discussion concerning the “**superconductor**” with a panel of legislators and scientists.
- 3:00 p.m.**    **Committee meeting** (taped)
- 4:00 p.m.**    **Senate session** (taped earlier in the afternoon)  
 SB 136 (Hart) Institutes **AIDS** prevention program for junior and senior high school students.
- 7:00 p.m.**    **“California Today”** (live with taped inserts)  
 A **news summary** of the highlights from the state capital—the day’s legislative action as well as other events from state government agencies and the courts.
- 8:00 p.m.**    **Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m.**    **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 1987
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- 9:00 a.m.**    **Press conference** (live)  
 The Hollywood “**clean water**” delegation.
- 10:00 a.m.**    **Assembly session** (live)  
 AB 1331 (Costa) Moves presidential **primary** to second Tuesday of March (“**Super Tuesday**”). Introduced.
- 1:00 p.m.**    **Feature: “Legislator in Focus”** (taped)  
 A day in the life of Senator **Quentin Kopp**.
- 2:00 p.m.**    **Committee meetings** (taped or live)  
 Selected **hearings** held today.
- 7:00 p.m.**    **“California Today”** (live with taped inserts)  
 A **news summary** of the highlights from the state capital—the day’s legislative action as well as other events from state government agencies and the courts.
- 8:00 p.m.**    **Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m.**    **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 1987
9:00 a.m.	<b>Press conference</b> (live) Senator John Doolittle charges that a powerful homosexual lobby in California and Washington has successfully blocked efforts to treat AIDS like any other venereal disease.	
10:00 a.m.	<b>Assembly session</b> (live) AB 1386 (Cortese); AB 1393, 1394, 1395 (Floyd); AB 1568 (N. Waters) Attempt to reverse dismally low voter turnout in elections. Introduced. AB 1467 (Moore) Finances a public broadcasting endowment program by the sale of bonds. Introduced.	
1:00 p.m.	<b>Interview</b> (taped) Mervin Field, Publisher of the <i>California Poll</i> , on Independents and primary elections.	
2:00 p.m.	<b>Committee meetings</b> (tape-delayed or live) Selected hearings held today.	
7:00 p.m.	<b>"California Today"</b> (live with taped inserts) A news summary of the highlights from the state capital—the day's legislative action as well as other events from state government agencies and the courts.	
8:00 p.m.	<b>Viewer call-ins</b> (live)	
9:00 p.m.	<b>Programming day repeats</b> from 9:00 p.m.—9:00 a.m.	
TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1987

9:00 a.m.	<b>Press conference</b> (live) Assembly Members Larry Stirling and Steve Peace lash back at press reports on the growing influence of campaign contributions on the Legislature.	
10:00 a.m.	<b>Assembly session</b> (live) Nobel laureate Dr. David Baltimore, and Surgeon General C. Everett Koop speak before a joint convention of both houses on the topic of AIDS. AB 94 (Hughes), and SB 137 (Keene) Restores 76.2 million dollars for state schools and community colleges, twice vetoed by Gov. Deukmejian. Debate over MediCal budget cuts.	
1:00 p.m.	<b>Committee meetings</b> (taped or live) Selected hearings held today or earlier in week.	
3:00 p.m.	<b>Interview with viewer call-ins</b> (live) Dr. Baltimore and Surgeon General Koop on AIDS.	
4:00 p.m.	<b>Senate session</b> (tape-delayed from morning) SB 1000 - 1003, 1006, 1008 (Doolittle) Seek out carriers of AIDS and provide them with treatment. Introduced. SB 1078 (Vuich) Aims to improve low turnout at elections.	

- 7:00 p.m.**     **"California Today"** (live with taped inserts)  
A news summary of the highlights from the state capital—the day's legislative action as well as other events from state government agencies and the courts.
- 8:00 p.m.**     **Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m.**     **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 1987
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- 9:00 a.m.**     **Committee meetings** (taped from earlier in week)
- 5:00 p.m.**     **Debate** (taped)  
Assembly Member **Art Agnos** vs. Assembly Member **Larry Stirling**. Topic: school budget.
- 6:00 p.m.**     **Discussion with viewer call-ins** (live)  
Topic: The Governor's proposal to slash the budget of the **State Public Defender's Office**. Critics contend that it is unfair to reduce the effectiveness of this agency while stepping up efforts to apply the death penalty. Supporters offer their views.
- 7:00 p.m.**     **Press conference** (live)  
Weekly press availability with Speaker **Willie Brown**
- 8:00 p.m.**     **"California Week in Review"** (live)  
Journalists' roundtable of the week's politics, hosted by **Bob Fairbanks** of the *Daily Recorder*.
- 9:00 p.m.**     **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1987
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- 9:00 a.m.**     **"Capitol Scene"** (taped)  
The *Sacramento Bee's* political columnist, **Dan Walters**, discusses the San Francisco **Congressional runoff** with a slate of invited guests.
- 10:00 a.m.**     **Discussion of issues** (taped)  
**Computer monitoring** of the workplace, a boon to productivity or a violation of personal privacy? A discussion of recent legislation with a panel of invited guests.
- 11:00 a.m.**     **Feature: "Political Action Primer"** (repeat)  
A step-by-step guide to understanding the **legislative process** and making your views known to legislators.
- Noon**           **The Best of The California Channel** (repeat)  
Highlights from the previous week's floor and committee sessions.
- 8:00 p.m.**     **Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m.**     **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.



**Sample B**  
**California Channel Program Schedule:**  
**Derived from Legislative Proceedings and Events,**  
**the Week of June 29–July 4, 1986 <sup>2</sup>**

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 1986
9:00 a.m.	<b>Senate Judiciary Committee</b> (tape-delayed from 6/24) AB 483 (Costa) Prohibits <b>rent control</b> on new apartments and all single family housing. AB 1707 (Duffy) The Alternative Reproduction Act of 1985. Authorizes a procedure for contracts for <b>surrogate parenting</b> . AB 1801 (Robinson) Restricts actions for damages from <b>aircraft noise</b> to permanent and not continuing nuisances. AB 2165 (McAlister) Limits <b>attorney contingency fees</b> in personal injury cases. Places restrictions on insurance companies that wish to cancel policies.	
Noon	<b>Assembly Committee on Health</b> (tape-delayed from 6/24) SB 1518 (Royce) Requires that emergency medical technicians be notified when they have treated a person with <b>AIDS</b> . SB 1542 (Doolittle) Allows parents to direct that only blood received from the parents be used in blood transfusion to their child (re: <b>AIDS</b> ). SB 2453 (Marks) Provides presumptive eligibility for Medi-Cal for people with severe, disabling <b>AIDS Related Condition (ARC)</b> . SB 2484 (Roberti) States that realtors do not have the duty to disclose to a potential tenant or purchaser that the previous occupant was afflicted with the <b>AIDS virus</b> , and provides that no cause of action arises from not disclosing that information.	
4:00 p.m.	<b>Assembly Committee on Human Services</b> (tape-delayed from 6/25) AB 3650 (Margolin) Makes it a misdemeanor for anyone to add <b>sulfites</b> to any fruit or vegetable sold to be consumed in its raw or natural state or added to food sold to any food facility. AB 4241 (Hughes) Establishes the California <b>Prenatal Care Task Force</b> for the purpose of developing the specifications for a statewide program of maternity services.	
6:00 p.m.	<b>Press conference</b> (repeat, taped 6/23, 9:00 a.m.) Assembly Member Gil <b>Ferguson</b> calls for <b>expulsion</b> of Assembly Member Tom <b>Hayden</b> .	
6:30 p.m.	<b>Assembly floor debate</b> (repeat, taped 6/23, 10:30 a.m.) Assembly Member Gil <b>Ferguson</b> (R-Newport Beach) calls for the <b>expulsion</b> of Assembly Member Tom <b>Hayden</b> (D-Santa Monica) because of Hayden's anti-war activities in the Vietnam Era. Ferguson/Hayden debate ensues. Speaker Brown rules against appropriateness of the motion to expel Hayden. Decision is sustained by a bare 41-vote majority, mostly along party lines.	

<sup>2</sup> Compiled by Gregg McVicar, Annenberg School of Communications, July 1986.

Assembly session continues with **special ceremony** for retiring Speaker pro Tempore Frank Vicencia (D-Bellflower).

- 7:00 p.m.** **Press conference** (repeat)  
Assembly Member Tom Hayden replies to Ferguson's attempt to oust him.
- 8:00 p.m.** **"California Week in Review"** (repeat from Fri. p.m.)  
Journalists' roundtable of the week's politics. Bob Fairbanks of *The Daily Recorder* leads this spirited in-studio discussion among members of the capital press corps. Viewer call-ins.
- 9:00 p.m.** **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	MONDAY, JUNE 30, 1986
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- 9:00 a.m.** **Interview** (live)  
Michael Kroll, writer for Pacific News Service, on Democratic shift regarding death penalty.
- 10:00 a.m.** **Senate Committee on Appropriations** (live)  
AB 134 (Waters, M.) Prohibits new investments of trust fund or state monies in business firms or in banks doing business with any South African corporation or with the the government of **South Africa**.
- 11:00 a.m.** **Feature** (taped)  
Historical **tour** of the restored Capitol building.
- 11:15 a.m.** **Assembly session** (live)
- 3:00 p.m.** **Senate Committee on Appropriations** (tape-delayed from morning)  
SB 1858 (Rosenthal) Extends the **solar energy** tax credit through 1990 tax year.
- 5:00 p.m.** **Senate session** (tape-delayed from 1:00 p.m.)
- 8:00 p.m.** **Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m.** **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	TUESDAY, JULY 1, 1986
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- 9:00 a.m.** **Interviews and discussion** (live with viewer call-ins)  
Thomas Tobin, Executive Director of the Seismic Safety Commission and Jane Hindmarsh, Earthquake Preparedness Division, Office of Emergency Services. Topic: recent events and **earthquake safety**.
- 10:00 a.m.** **Joint Hearing of the Senate Budget and Assembly Ways and Means Committees** (live)  
Joint overview hearing on the **Gann Salary Limitation Initiative**.
- Noon** **Assembly session** (live)

- 3:00 p.m. Senate Committee on Governmental Organization** (tape-delayed from morning)  
AB 2774 (M. Waters) Requires net revenues from the **State Lottery** go to fund school child care and development programs.
- 4:00 p.m. Assembly Finance Committee** (tape-delayed)  
SB 1587 (Robbins) Reduces **insurance premiums** by 5% now that Proposition 51 has been adopted.
- 6:00 p.m. Assembly Judiciary Committee** (taped-delayed)  
AB 2459 (McAlister) Makes it a crime to perform an **abortion** on an unemancipated minor without complying with specified procedures.
- 7:00 p.m. Senate Committee on Business and Professions** (tape-delayed from 6/30)  
AB 2753 (W. Brown) Prohibits gifts to a prospective **student athlete**, or members of his or her immediate family, for the purpose of inducing, encouraging, or rewarding the student athlete for applying, enrolling at, or attending, a public or private college to participate in any intercollegiate sporting event.
- 8:00 p.m. Viewer call-ins** (live)
- 9:00 p.m. Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	WEDNESDAY, JULY 2, 1986
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- 9:00 a.m. Discussion and viewer call-ins** (live)  
*Sacramento Bee* political correspondent Dan Walters talks about his just-released book, based on his own 9000-mile odyssey through California's 58 counties, *The New California: Facing the 21st Century*.
- 10:00 a.m. Press conference** (live)  
Senator Foran
- 11:00 a.m. Press conference** (live)  
Chauncey Veatch, director of the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.
- Noon Senate Committee on Transportation** (tape-delayed from 7/1)  
AB 3819 (Costa) Creates the Los Angeles-Fresno-Bay Area-Sacramento **high-speed rail** corridor study group to study and develop a plan for developing a high speed rail corridor.
- 1:30 p.m. Press conference** (live)  
State Lottery Commission
- 2:15 p.m. Senate Committee on Education** (tape-delayed from morning)  
Special Order of Business: **School Construction Funding**, K-12.
- 6:00 p.m. Senate Committee on Elections** (tape-delayed from morning)  
AB 1787 (Bates) Allows **voter registration** at local Dept. of Motor Vehicles offices.  
AB 3824 (Klehs) Reduces **campaign committee disclosure** requirements under the Political Reform Act of 1974.
- 8:00 p.m. Discussion and viewer call-ins** (live)  
Jeff Raimundo, *Sacramento Bee*. Subject: **The New Republican Party**.
- 9:00 p.m. Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1986
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- 9:00 a.m. **Discussion and viewer call-ins** (live)  
Secretary of State, March Fong Eu. Topic: **voter turnout** in June primary. Plans for November.
- 10:00 a.m. **Assembly session** (live)
- 3:00 p.m. **Senate session** (tape-delayed from morning)
- 8:00 p.m. **Discussion and viewer call-ins** (live)  
Guests Ed Salzman, Editor and Publisher, *Golden State Report*, and Martin Stone, Chairman, *California Business* magazine. Topic: California's economic outlook.
- 9:00 p.m. **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.–9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	FRIDAY, JULY 4, 1986
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- 9:00 a.m. **Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife** (tape-delayed from 6/24)  
AB 947 (N. Waters) Allows ranchers to kill **mountain lions** to protect domestic livestock. Provides state reimbursement for livestock destroyed by mountain lions if state management plans are not adopted.  
AB 2495 (Costa) Establishes a museum within the Department of Parks and Recreation as the official State **Agricultural Museum**.  
AB 3101 (Sher) Designates segments of the Carson, West Walker, and McCloud Rivers for potential additions to the **wild and scenic river** system.  
AB 3117 (Mountjoy) In specified areas, reclassifies the fully protected Nelson **bighorn sheep** as game mammals.
- 1:00 p.m. **Debate** (taped)  
Activist Paul Gann and Lt. Governor Leo McCarthy. Topic: "California's Fair Pay Amendment."
- 2:00 p.m. **Feature: "A Day in the Life"** (taped)  
Our camera follows a legislator through a busy day. This week, Assembly-member John Vasconcellos.
- 3:00 p.m. **Roundtable discussion: "Silicon Valley Fever: From Apple to Zschau"** (taped)  
A look at the politics and culture of the region with Everett Rogers and Judith Larson, co-authors of the book *Silicon Valley Fever*, Thomas Hoeber, publisher of the *California Journal* and Steve Wiegand, correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.
- 4:00 p.m. **Feature: "Computers in the Capitol"** (taped)  
A behind the scenes look at how **computers** keep information moving for legislators, lobbyists, campaign managers, the press and state agencies.

- 5:00 p.m.**     **Roundtable discussion: Metro Rail** (taped on location)  
**Metro Rail** update. Produced by the School of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.
- 6:00 p.m.**     **Interview** (taped)  
**Loretta Allen**, Executive Secretary of the state's Native American Heritage Commission. Topic: Perspectives on July 4th—**Native American** issues.
- 7:00 p.m.**     **Press conference** (taped)  
Weekly press availability with Assembly Speaker **Willie Brown**.
- 8:00 p.m.**     **"California Week in Review"** (live)  
**Bob Fairbanks** of *The Daily Recorder* and members of the capital press corps gather for a lively chat about the week's politics.
- 9:00 p.m.**     **Programming day repeats** from 9:00 p.m.—9:00 a.m.

TIME	PROGRAM AND SUBJECT	SATURDAY, JULY 5, 1986
<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Interview</b> (taped) <b>Rita Schmidt Sudman</b> , Executive Director of the Water Education Foundation interviews <b>Don Maughan</b> , new Chairman of the State Water Resources Control Board. Subject: <b>pollution</b> .	
<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Feature</b> (taped) A visit to the Department of Motor Vehicles headquarters to meet the staff assigned to screen all applications for <b>personalized license plates</b> . A light-hearted look at Californians' passion for vanity plates.	
<b>10:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Assembly Committee on Ways and Means</b> (tape-delayed from 7/2) <b>AB 3201</b> (Davis) Creates tax incentives for <b>film makers</b> to produce films in California.	
<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Campaign '86</b> (taped) Speeches by gubernatorial candidates <b>Bradley</b> and <b>Deukmejian</b> recorded at engagements earlier in the week.	
<b>Noon</b>	<b>The Best of the California Channel</b> (repeat) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday's <b>Ferguson/Hayden</b> floor scuffle and press conferences.</li> <li>• <b>South African</b> investments.</li> <li>• <b>"Silicon Valley Fever: From Apple to Zschau"</b></li> <li>• <b>Committee hearings</b> and floor debates.</li> </ul>	
<b>8:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Debate</b> (repeat) Activist <b>Paul Gann</b> and Lt. Governor <b>Leo McCarthy</b> . Topic: "California's Fair Pay Amendment."	
<b>9:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Programming day repeats</b> from 9:00 p.m.—9:00 a.m.	



## Appendix F

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# California Cable Systems Channel Capacity

Appendix F provides a listing of individual cable systems according to channel capacity, number of unused channels and population served.

This table lists cable systems rather than all the individual municipalities served by cable companies in California. One cable system might hold several franchises in an area.

The 1989 *Television and Cable Factbook*, from which this table is derived, indicates that 367 California cable systems serve a total of 1,149 communities.<sup>1</sup> The *Factbook* contains information on channel capacity for 351 systems, on unused channel capacity for 268 systems and on population for 248 systems.

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<sup>1</sup> *Television and Cable Factbook*, No. 57. Washington, DC: Warren Publishing, 1989.

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Adelanto	12	0	2.1
Alameda	78	15	75.9
Alhambra	54		280.5
Alpine	35	3	15.0
Alta Loma	30		
Alta Loma/Redlands	35	3	40.7
Alturas	36		3.5
Anaheim	41	0	218.5
Artesia	64	10	14.3
Arvin	12	0	
Atascadero	20		63.7
Auburn	35	0	
Avalon/Catalina	52		2.0
Avenal	35		4.1
Azusa	35	2	80.0
Bakersfield/Kern E.&W.	53	4	250.0
Bakersfield/Kern W.	35	0	126.3
Banning	36	1	
Barstow	40	10	35.0
Bear Valley	12		
Bell	64	10	46.8
Bellflower	54	0	154.4
Benicia	35	3	15.4
Big Bear Lake	23	6	48.0
Big Pine	21	4	
Bishop	21	0	10.0
Blythe	18		
Boron	36	18	5.6
Borrego Springs	35	2	
Brea	45	6	
Brentwood	42	3	
Burlingame	54	3	30.0
Burney Falls	35	14	4.2
Cabrillo Heights	36		
Calabasas Park	62	20	5.6
Calabasas/Lost Hills	60	25	
Calipatria	36	22	3.7
Camarillo	70	46	40.2
Canyon Country	24	1	57.2
Carlsbad	38		150.0

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Carmel Highlands	18		
Carson	60	17	85.0
Caruthers	35		1.2
Cathedral City	56	29	11.1
Cedarville	14		0.8
Ceres	29	2	22.0
Cerritos	70	39	59.3
Chester	35	14	
Chico	35	7	87.0
Chino	60	6	51.3
Chino Hills	42		
Chowchilla	54	30	5.7
Chula Vista	40		128.3
City of Industry	69		
Claremont	64	10	33.7
Clearlake	22	1	
Coalinga	26		7.5
Colton	36	2	27.4
Compton	54	1	
Concord	36	0	109.6
Corona	54	9	50.0
Corona/Sunnymead	14	0	42.9
Coronado	62	0	19.6
Costa Mesa	108	20	82.6
Covina	54	7	42.8
Crescent City	27	10	
Crowley Lake	12		1.0
Crown Colony	26		
Cucamonga	60	27	55.3
Culver City	52	2	
Cupertino	54	5	47.4
Cypress	54	2	41.1
Daly City	35	1	74.9
Daly City/Redwd. City	36		78.5
Davis	60	14	43.2
Death Valley	42	25	0.5
Desert Center	20	8	1.5
Desert Hot Springs	35	2	
Dixon	36		5.0
Dorris	14		0.8
Downey	52		102.5

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Downieville	12	3	1.0
Duarte	60	15	16.8
Earlimart	54		4.6
East Bay	36	6	
Easton	35		1.5
El Centro	36	0	90.0
El Monte	146	90	88.0
Emeryville	36		3.7
Empire	54	24	
Eureka	42	11	121.1
Fairfield	40	0	72.0
Fall River Mills	14		
Farmersville	54	21	21.0
Finer Living	35	0	213.5
Fontana	40		56.7
Forest Falls	36		
Fort Jones	20		
Fort Ord	36	3	20.0
Foster City	29	0	23.0
Frazier Park	21	3	
Fremont	35	5	121.0
Fresno	35		429.7
Fullerton	52	1	137.8
Garberville	21	3	2.8
Gilroy	35	0	
Glendale	35		309.5
Glendora	36	2	314.4
Gonzales	36	11	3.0
Grass Valley	35	4	10.0
Green Valley Lake	13	0	
Greenfield	28	7	4.2
Groveland	12		
Hacienda Heights	56		249.7
Half Moon Bay	36	1	
Hamilton AFB	36	5	
Hanford	40	0	60.0
Happy Camp	14		
Hawaiian Gardens	54	10	10.5

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Hayfork	21	11	1.8
Hayward	30	0	
Hemet	42	12	120.0
Hercules	50	0	
Herlong/Sierra Depot	36		
Hermosa Beach	36	0	58.0
Hesperia	40	12	
Hillsborough	78	5	10.4
Huron	36	17	3.4
Independence	21	3	4.5
Inglewood	53	9	94.2
Inverness	35	20	2.0
Ione	30	13	2.5
Irvine	35	0	
Isleton	62	30	
Jamul	80	26	1.8
Julian	36	11	3.0
June Lake	20	5	1.1
Kern River Valley	29	0	
King City	28	7	8.4
Klamath	12	2	
La Crescenta	54		16.5
La Mesa Village	12	0	
La Mirada	52		41.0
Laguna Niguel	64	22	12.2
Laguna Niguel/Sn Juan	35	10	256.8
Laguna Seca	13		
Lake Arrowhead	27		
Lake Elsinore	36	6	50.0
Lake Hughes	42	21	0.6
Lake of the Pines	52		
Lake Wildwood	30	2	
Lakewood	120	50	80.0
Lancaster	36	2	175.0
Le Grand	35	23	1.5
Lindsay	21	1	7.2
Littlerock	22	10	
Live Oak	36	0	4.1



System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Livingston	54	24	
Lodi	60	25	50.0
Lomita	108		19.5
Lompoc	35	9	
Long Barn	12	3	0.3
Long Beach	120	60	410.0
Los Alamos	35	23	1.0
Los Altos Hills	60		7.4
Los Angeles/Boyle	66		
Los Angeles/Culv. City	54	1	1000.0
Los Angeles/E. Valley	77	16	
Los Angeles/S. Central	56	1	
Los Angeles/Sta. Mon.	35	5	1180.7
Los Angeles/Tujunga	26	1	59.0
Los Angeles/W. Valley	61	13	473.0
Los Banos	36	0	20.1
Los Gatos	26		30.0
Malibu	13	0	19.0
Mammoth Lakes	36	7	
Marin County	37	0	139.2
Mariposa	12	1	1.2
Marysville	54		
Mather AFB	60	18	5.2
Maywood	52		62.0
McClellan AFB	60	18	
Meadow Vista	60	18	
Mecca	12		1.1
Merced	36	0	90.0
Meyers	36	3	13.0
Midpines	12		0.4
Millbrae	30	7	21.0
Milpitas	25	0	39.0
Modesto	78	30	150.0
Monterey	35	1	169.8
Monterey County	22		
Moreno Valley	58	18	65.0
Mount Shasta	36	15	12.0
Mountain Meadows	60		4.0
Mountain View	120	58	58.7
Napa	26	0	96.5

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Needles	54		4.1
New Cuyama	14	0	1.4
Newark	54	3	32.5
Newport Beach	30	0	
Novato	35	0	44.0
Oakdale	35	8	13.9
Oakhurst	21	0	11.7
Oakland	49	1	375.0
Oceanside	30	1	79.0
Ocotillo	12	2	0.5
Orange	35	0	106.0
Orange Co.	113	59	488.6
Oroville	30	0	
Oxnard	54	1	130.0
Pacifica	54	17	37.1
Palm Desert/Rvsd Co.	36	1	
Palm Desert/Rvsd Ctrl.	54	22	11.8
Palm Springs	24	0	
Palo Alto	81	0	123.2
Palo Cedro	40	15	
Palos Verdes Penin.	36	0	64.7
Paradise Park	12	1	
Pasadena/Kinneola	48		119.0
Pasadena/La Canada	54		200.0
Pauma Valley	15		
Piedmont	12		10.9
Pine Grove	52	16	14.0
Pine Mountain	36	21	
Pine Valley	35	12	1.0
Pinecrest	12	3	2.0
Pinole	36		25.4
Pittsburg	37		85.4
Pixley	54		2.5
Placer Co./Crystal Bay	31	0	
Placer Co./N.	21	3	27.0
Placer Co./SW.	36	2	25.0
Placerville	54	25	
Planada	36		2.7
Pleasant Hill	38	0	183.9
Pomona	36	5	100.0

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Port Costa	20		0.3
Porterville	35	5	
Portola	15	0	12.5
Poway	36	4	
Quincy	30	14	4.5
Quincy/Portola	12		
Rancho San Diego	35	4	
Rancho Sta. Margarita	61	19	9.0
Redlands	36	0	
Redondo Beach	35	1	60.0
Reedley	54	10	55.6
Richmond	30	5	177.1
Ridgecrest	40	2	30.0
Rio Vista	21	0	3.9
Riverbank	54	26	23.3
Riverdale	35		2.1
Riverside	54		
Rohnert Park	42	4	
Roseville	40	5	30.0
Round Valley	12		
Rubidoux	12	0	16.5
Sacramento	62	16	783.4
Sacramento/Arden Arc.	62	10	
Salton Sea Beach	40	15	
San Andreas	40		33.0
San Bernadino	26	0	
San Bernadino/Co.	35	3	118.1
San Bruno	27	0	35.1
San Carlos	30	2	110.0
San Diego Country Est.	24	1	6.0
San Diego Naval Base	54	11	
San Diego/N.	37	2	411.0
San Diego/S.	36	0	1143.5
San Francisco	36	0	750.0
San Jose	64	6	650.0
San Leandro	30	0	63.4
San Lorenzo	30	0	65.0
San Luis Obispo	36	1	
San Marcos	54		

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
San Marino	40	9	13.3
San Mateo	28		79.0
San Pablo	35	6	36.7
San Simeon Acres	36		
Santa Ana	60	1	205.7
Santa Barbara	37	0	223.0
Santa Clara	28	1	98.0
Santa Clarita	30	12	41.4
Santa Cruz	35	1	
Santa Cruz Co.	21	10	
Santa Rosa	54	1	135.4
Saratoga	30		27.1
Scotts Valley	60	26	6.9
Sea Ranch	35	15	8.0
Seal Beach	60	18	24.6
Searles Valley	22	1	4.0
Sierra City	12	2	0.8
Sierra Madre	60	6	58.9
Simi Valley	20		
Soledad	36	11	7.0
Sonoma Co./Petaluma	33	1	299.8
Sonora	35	4	
South El Monte	54	1	16.6
South Gate	111		66.8
South Lake Tahoe	30	1	
South Pasadena	40	9	35.3
South San Francisco	42	3	57.0
Spring Valley	30		49.0
Stockton	35	0	300.0
Sun City	35	3	
Sunnyvale	35	6	106.6
Susanville	36	15	10.0
Taft	35	16	20.0
Tassajara Valley	62	26	
Tehama	14		2.6
Thousand Oaks/Malibu	26	4	
Thousand Oaks/Westlk.	34	0	281.9
Thousand Palms	12		1.8
Tipton	54		1.2
Torrance	60		304.9

System	Channel Capacity	Unused Channels	Population (thousands)
Tracy	60	15	30.0
Travis AFB	35	0	10.0
Treasure Isl. Naval	42		
Tri-Palm Estates	12	0	
Trinity County	21	6	3.5
Truckee	20	2	10.0
Tulare	40	0	100.0
Turlock	31	9	
Tustin	56	9	32.1
Ukiah	35	4	101.7
Union City	53	1	44.0
Vacaville	35	0	60.0
Vallejo	50	22	90.0
Valley Center	20	10	
Vandenberg AFB	54	14	
Ventura	36	0	49.3
Ventura/E.	35	4	40.0
Victorville	41	5	
Walnut	54		
Walnut Creek	54	14	55.0
Watsonville	36	0	40.0
West Covina	54		165.0
West Lake Tahoe	12	0	
West Sacramento	38	0	72.7
Westchester	42	4	98.0
Whittier	35	0	69.7
Williams	30	1	3.8
Willow Creek	14		0.9
Wilmington	120	53	
Wrightwood	21		
Yorba Linda	72	36	
Yountville	35		
Yreka	30	4	7.1
Yucaipa	43	24	20.0
Yucca Valley	35	0	42.0



## Appendix G

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# Budget Requirements of the California Channel

**Table G.1**  
**Legislative Technical Systems Cost Summary:**  
**Capital and Ongoing Costs**

<b>Minimum-Level System</b>	
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of one chamber, its major committee room and press conference room. No coverage is provided for rooms not installed with fixed remote-control cameras. A staff of 6 full-time employees includes managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants.	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$100,000
Equipment and installation	
Remote-control cameras for 1 chamber (6 cameras), 1 comm. rm. (4 cameras), press conf. rm. (2 cameras); with 2 control facilities	\$1,150,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 6 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$270,000
Technical operating costs: supplies, parts, maintenance, deprec.	\$173,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$443,000

*Continued*

**Table G.1, continued**  
**Legislative Technical Systems Cost Summary:**  
**Capital and Ongoing Costs**

<b>Mid-Level System</b>	
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of both chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. No coverage is provided for rooms not installed with fixed remote-control cameras. A staff of 9 full-time employees includes managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants.	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$150,000
Equipment and installation	
Remote-control cameras for 2 chambers (12 cameras), 2 comm. rms. (8 cameras), press conf. rm. (2 cameras); with 3 control facilities	\$2,000,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 9 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$405,000
Technical operating costs: supplies, parts, maintenance, deprec.	\$300,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$705,000

<b>Large-Scale System</b>	
Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided of both chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. With the use of transportable field production equipment, a camera crew provides coverage of proceedings in rooms not installed with fixed remote-control cameras. A staff of 12 full-time employees includes a managing director, technical director-engineer and technical and clerical assistants.	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$150,000
Equipment and installation	
Remote-control cameras for 2 chambers (12 cameras), 2 comm. rms. (8 cameras), press conf. rm. (2 cameras); with 3 control facilities	\$2,000,000
Electronic field production unit (2 cameras)	\$170,000
Total, equipment and installation	\$2,170,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 12 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$540,000
Technical operating costs: supplies, parts, maintenance, deprec.	\$326,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$866,000

Note: Ongoing operating estimates assume operation within the Capitol and do not include rent or other administrative overhead expenses.

**Table G.2**  
**California Channel Technical Systems Cost Summary:**  
**Capital and Ongoing Costs**

<b>Minimum-Level System</b>	
<p>Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided for one chamber, its main committee room and press conference room. Satellite feed is 4 hours per day, 260 days per year. Satellite uplink service is rented. Staff of 8 full-time employees includes executive director, director of development, technical director and technical and clerical assistants.</p>	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$100,000
Equipment and installation	
Master control facility	\$820,000
Microwave from Capitol	\$60,000
Microwave to uplink	\$40,000
Office equipment	\$50,000
Total, equipment and installation	\$970,000
<b>Ongoing operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 8 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$372,000
Administrative operating costs	\$273,000
Technical operating costs	\$691,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$1,336,000

<b>Mid-Level System</b>	
<p>Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided for two chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. A weekly news summary is produced in rented studio. Limited coverage of outside events is provided with electronic news-gathering unit. Satellite feed is 8 hours per day, 260 days per year. Satellite uplink service is leased. Staff of 12 full-time employees includes executive director, director of development, technical director and technical and clerical assistants.</p>	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$100,000
Equipment and installation	
Master control facility	\$1,030,000
Electronic news-gathering unit	\$50,000
Microwave from Capitol	\$70,000
Microwave to uplink	\$40,000
Office equipment	\$60,000
Total, equipment and installation	\$1,250,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 12 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$528,000
Administrative operating costs	\$305,000
Technical operating costs	\$1,245,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$2,078,000

Continued

**Table G.2, continued**  
**California Channel Technical Systems Cost Summary:**  
**Capital and Ongoing Costs**

<b>Large-Scale System</b>	
<p>Gavel-to-gavel coverage is provided for two chambers, two main committee rooms of the Assembly and Senate and press conference room. Programs produced in the California Channel-operated studio include news summaries, interviews and viewer call-ins. Expanded coverage is provided of state government activities and conferences with field production units. Satellite feed is 12 hours per day, 365 days per year. The California Channel owns and operates its own satellite uplink. Staff of 18 full-time employees includes executive director, director of development, technical director and technical and clerical assistants.</p>	
<b>Start-up and capital costs</b>	
Engineering studies	\$150,000
Equipment and installation	
Master control facility	\$1,380,000
Studio	\$600,000
Microwave from Capitol	\$70,000
Electronic news-gathering unit	\$50,000
Electronic field production unit	\$170,000
Satellite uplink	\$500,000
Microwave to uplink	\$40,000
Office equipment	\$70,000
Total, equipment and installation	\$2,880,000
<b>Annual operating costs</b>	
Salaries: 18 staff, including benefits and payroll taxes	\$758,000
Administrative operating costs	\$398,000
Technical operating costs	\$1,240,000
Total, annual operating costs	\$2,396,000

## Appendix H

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# Glossary of Cable Television and Satellite Terminology

**Access channels:** channels set aside by the cable system for programming that originates from the cable system and/or community groups; the most common are:

**Combined access channel:** available to more than one sector in the community; also known as community access channel.

**Educational access channel:** dedicated to educational programming or to one or more educational institutions.

**Government access channel:** set aside for use by government agencies; also known as municipal access channel.

**Leased access channel:** made available by the cable operator for lease by outside programmers; the 1984 *Cable Communications Policy Act* mandates that cable systems with more than 35 channels must set aside leased access channels.

**PEG channels:** the acronym for public, educational and government access channels.

**Public access channel:** set aside for the general public.

**Activated channel:** a cable channel that is technically equipped to carry and deliver video programming; a channel that is carrying a signal.

**Antenna:** a structure designed to either send or receive radio-frequency energy; for satellite transmission, often referred to as a satellite dish.

**Basic cable:** the minimum cable service subscribers receive for a monthly fee.

**Cable television:** originally referred to as CATV, or community antenna television; the use of coaxial cable (as opposed to over-the-air broadcast transmission) to deliver multiple video channels from a headend to subscribers' homes.

**C-Band:** the frequency band of 4–6 GHz (gigahertz) used for satellite transmission; the frequency used by the older communications satellites and those transmitting cable television programming.

**Camera control unit, or CCU:** allows the remote control of a number of functions on the camera such as supplying a steady voltage to the camera regardless of cable length.



**Coaxial cable:** a special concentric cable used to keep spurious signals from intruding on the signal being carried on the cable.

**Common carrier:** the class of transmission systems such as telephone, telegraph and certain satellites that are open to public use at uniform fees; generally not permitted to control the content of what is transmitted on them.

**Control room:** a room adjacent to or near the camera installation where the audio and video control functions are performed.

**DBS:** direct broadcast satellite—the use of high powered satellites and smaller reception dishes to deliver video programming to subscribers.

**Dedicated channel:** (1) cable channel that is designated exclusively for a specific type of programming or use by one or more institutions in the community. (2) cable channel that is designated (as above) in the franchise agreement or ordinance but is not activated.

**Downlink:** a receiving antenna designed to pick up signals from a communications satellite; also refers to the signal path from a satellite to an earth station.

**Earth station:** electronic ground equipment used with an antenna, or satellite dish, for receiving radio frequency signals and/or transmitting them to a satellite.

**Edit:** to remove, replace or change portions of an audio or video tape.

**Electronic field production, or EFP:** video equipment used for remote-site coverage, often in conjunction with a truck or van that supplies the control capabilities; allows more extensive and technically sophisticated remote coverage than ENG equipment.

**Electronic news gathering, or ENG:** portable self-contained camera and taping system used for remote-site coverage; battery operated and hand-held.

**Feedhorn:** the focal point on a satellite antenna where the signal is collected and passed on to signal amplification equipment.

**Footprint:** the pattern of a satellite's transmission where it strikes the earth.

**Franchise:** the contractual agreement between a cable operator and a government body which defines the rights and responsibilities of each in the construction and operation of a cable system within a specified geographic area.

**Gavel-to-gavel:** media coverage of government and other proceedings that is presented in a complete and unedited manner from start to finish without commentary, except for identification of speakers, sponsor and the subject matter under discussion. (Source: NY-SCAN.)

**Geosynchronous orbit:** an orbit 22,300 miles above the equator, in which a satellite appears to remain stationary in the sky because it is moving at precisely the speed of the earth's rotation; also referred to geostationary orbit.

**GHz:** gigahertz; a unit of frequency; 4 GHz is a frequency of 4 billion cycles per second.

**Headend:** where cable system programming is received and then transmitted to subscribers; the gathering point for a variety of transmission media—satellites, microwave, off-air from local broadcast television stations.

**Interconnect:** where two or more cable systems are linked together, usually by microwave, in order to distribute advertising or programming simultaneously.

- ITFS:** instructional television fixed service—channels in the ultra-high frequency microwave range, set aside for educational use; technically identical to MDS, multipoint distribution service.
- Ku-Band:** the frequency band of 12–14 GHz used in the more recently launched satellites; retransmits a stronger signal and requires smaller dishes than C-band satellites.
- Local origination channel (LO):** programmed by the local cable system; unlike access channels, the LO channel is under the operator's editorial control and frequently carries advertising.
- LPTV:** low power television—broadcast television transmitted in a relatively small radius on channels where regular full-power TV stations would not or could not be established.
- Master control:** a central switching point in a video operation where a number of feeds are routed.
- MMDS:** multichannel multipoint distribution service—a grouping of four or more channels transmitted by ultra-high frequency microwave to subscribers equipped with antennae and frequency downconverters; also called wireless cable.
- MSO:** multiple system operator—a company that operates more than one cable TV system.
- Optical fiber:** a high capacity broadband medium that transmits light frequencies through a glass fiber using a light-emitting diode (LED) or semi-conductor laser as the light source.
- Penetration rate:** percentage of households using a product or service—for example, cable.
- Scrambling:** altering a TV signal transmission so it can't be received without a decoder.
- Shelf space:** a term borrowed from retailing, synonymous with channel capacity.
- SMATV:** satellite master antenna television—a miniature cable system, enabling apartment complexes or hotels to receive television via satellite; also called private cable.
- STV:** subscription television—pay television transmitted over the air to subscribers who use special decoders to receive the signal; usually transmitted by UHF stations.
- Subcarrier:** in television and radio transmission, the portion of the signal which modulates another carrier wave of higher frequency; this portion of the signal is not received by ordinary television and radio receivers but can be used to transmit other signals requiring special receivers; for example computer data and background music for shopping centers.
- Superstation:** a local TV station whose signal is fed to a satellite and delivered to cable systems nationwide.
- Switcher:** the device used in television production to mix and switch between video inputs.
- Teleconferencing:** simultaneous audio and/or visual hookups that allow individuals in two or more areas to communicate with one another in a long-distance "conference" atmosphere; audio teleconferencing usually accomplished through telephone feeds, with videoconferencing transmitted via microwave, satellite or telephone signals.
- Teletext:** the transmission of text and graphics to the home TV set via the vertical blanking interval, the heavy black horizontal divider composed of 21 lines in the signal that are not used to carry the picture; required specially equipped TV sets; see also Videotex.
- Tier:** an optional cable channel or set of channels for which the subscriber pays an extra fee; sometimes called premium channel(s).
- Transponder:** the electronic circuits of a satellite which receive a signal from the ground, amplify it, and transmit it back to earth at a different frequency; typically, a single transponder can carry one color television signal or 600 two-way telephone conversations; current communications satellites usually have either 12 or 24 transponders.

**Uplink:** an antenna that transmits signals up to a communications satellite; also the transmission path from an earth station to a communications satellite.

**UHF:** ultra-high frequencies—the frequency band from 300 to 3000 megahertz that includes broadcast television channels 14 through 83.

**VHF:** very high frequencies—the frequency band from 30 to 300 megahertz that includes broadcast television channels 2 through 13.

**Videoconferencing:** see Teleconferencing.

**Videotex:** electronic text services consisting of computer-stored information which is selected by the user and displayed via personal computer and modem hookup, or specially equipped television set; normally accessed via telephone lines, but two-way cable connection also possible; see also Teletext.

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## NOTES

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# The California Channel . . .

This important new study explains how television coverage of state government proceedings can enhance the democratic process by providing citizens with access to the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

Using California as a model, the authors show why state government is virtually invisible to the electorate. They provide a detailed blueprint for constructing a statewide television network that would allow residents to watch their government representatives in action. Drawing on precedents set by television's coverage of Congress, other state legislatures and parliamentary systems, the study describes the key components of a state public affairs channel: satellite-fed distribution to cable television systems and other media, programming formats, technical designs and costs, funding models and implementation options.

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