

Testimony of Paul Giguere

President and CEO of the Connecticut Public Affairs Network, Inc. before the
Government Administration & Elections Committee in Support of Senate Bill 104
February 22, 2016

Connecticut deserves a State Civic Network When a bipartisan group of legislative leaders and our private nonprofit, the Connecticut Public Affairs Network (CPAN), launched the CTN project in 1999, we were responding to the same problems that face us today: an increasingly complex government trying to solve the problems of an increasingly complex world, a continually shrinking and overburdened Capitol press corps, and a citizenry more and more in need of help to be better informed and engaged in the workings of their government.

Even in 1999, CTN aimed to provide a solution. Back then, the network was new and untried, and no one knew what to expect from us. For the last 18 years CPAN has worked diligently to provide as much information and access as it could, and to earn the trust of both the citizenry and government officials. The good news is that we've earned the reputation for objectively providing citizen access to the issues and processes of state government. But the bad news is that our coverage has not kept pace with the significant advances in technology and the way citizens use technology to access the information how and when they want it.

In this building alone, there are 10 hearing rooms, but CTN's physical plant limits us to covering only two events concurrently. That means up to 80% of the Legislative committee process at any given time goes unseen. Our capacity to cover the Executive and Judicial Branches is even more limited. The most frequently asked question of any CTN employee should not surprise you as I'm sure many of you have even asked it: "Why are you not covering this committee hearing or that committee meeting?" In 1999, covering two legislative events at the same time was covering two more than had ever before been made available publicly. But today, technology has changed; the public's access to information has changed; but CT-N has remained the same.

The world has changed We see it every day. Advances in technology have dramatically altered the way citizens receive and access information. American adults, most particularly young adults, are turning with greater frequency to mobile devices for news and information, with social media playing an increasingly important role. Media itself has changed, with On Demand programming overtaking appointment TV and the increasing expectation that programming services – including CTN – have all of their content available everywhere, from the largest high-definition television to the smallest smartphone. Even civics and civic participation have changed, where information access and social networking have made it easier than ever for constituencies to mobilize, making it more important than ever for those constituencies to be well-informed.

To fulfill its public service mission, a new generation of CTN must adapt to manage, and even anticipate, these technological innovations that continually transform how Connecticut citizens interact with each other, and with their government.

SB104 creates a modern civic network A State Civic Network in Connecticut will combine the best practices of well-respected networks throughout the country like the Florida Channel,

Pennsylvania Cable Network and TVW in Washington State to provide Connecticut citizens with a programming service that meets their needs and expectations today. A State Civic Network, as envisioned in SB104, will provide:

- Significantly more coverage: 100% of legislative meetings and hearings, 100% of Supreme Court and Appellate Court arguments allowable under current Judicial rules, and 100% of proceedings for select state agencies.
- More ways to access that coverage, making important information about government and policy available to the public, educators and legislators, while providing a comprehensive and reliable primary source to the press for their own state house reporting.
- More tools and information that will help every audience and constituency to better understand the coverage we provide, to more successfully follow the legislative process and other government activity, and to more productively interact with you and their other elected leaders.

Central to this vision is the new structure for CTN proposed by this bill. The State Civic Network will be managed by a non-profit, non-partisan organization, regulated by PURA and financed in a similar manner as are C-SPAN and local community access stations. The organization will be accountable to Connecticut citizens through PURA and through operating agreements and reporting requirements with the legislative, executive and judicial branches of state government. It also makes CTN's managers responsible for anticipating and adapting to technological advances and the continually changing needs of Connecticut citizens.

For 18 years, the Connecticut Public Affairs Network has been proud to provide this public service to the citizens of Connecticut. Our organization wholeheartedly supports SB104 and its intent to dramatically expand coverage of all three branches of state government, in order to enhance citizen knowledge of, and informed participation in, state government.

Thank you for your time and consideration.