



The Connecticut Civic Network for our 21st Century Citizens



Operational Plan

February 2016

Connecticut Public Affairs Network, Inc. (CPAN)

State Civic Network, defined	 Current	 Next Generation
ALL Legislative Sessions	✓	✓
ALL Legislative Hearings		✓
ALL Legislative Meetings		✓
ALL Supreme Court Oral Arguments		✓
ALL Appellate Court Oral Arguments		✓
ALL Key Executive Branch Meetings		✓
ALL Key Executive Branch Hearings		✓
Public Policy Discussion Events	✓	✓
Electoral Process Coverage	✓	✓
Interview/discussion programs with state leaders		✓
Nightly recap of state government activities		✓
Multi-platform distribution, including “traditional” TV and Internet-based channels		✓
Searchable, sharable archives		✓
Seamless, integrated user interface for live streams, on-demand, and supporting documents		✓
Nimble, adaptable structure to anticipate and meet changes in technology and citizen needs		✓
Funded by subscriber fees, not government supported		✓

The Connecticut Civic Network Defined

The Connecticut Civic Network is the state-wide, cable channel and internet presence providing live and archived video coverage of Connecticut state government and civic affairs, which shall provide access to information about the substance and processes of the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of state government, and managed by a non-profit, non-partisan organization, funded by subscribers of community antenna television systems pursuant to 47 U.S. Code § 531.

47 U.S. Code § 531: “allows for a local ‘mini C-SPAN,’ thus contributing to an informed electorate, essential to the proper functioning of government.”

U.S. Senate Report No. 102-92 at 52-53 (June 28, 1991)- reprinted in 1992 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1133, 1185-86

“In order to cope with the ever-changing and constantly increasing problems of the booming communications industry, the Committee has formulated the legislation to ensure that the public interest, convenience and necessity is served, while allowing the cable industry an opportunity to develop to its maximum potential.”

U.S. Senate Report No. 102-92 at 53 (June 28, 1991) reprinted in 1992 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1133, 1186

Guiding Principle

Meaningful and effective citizen participation in our democracy depends on full, unfettered and reliable access to the deliberations and decisions of state government, using the tools of the digital age to overcome the barriers of time, distance and complexity that separate government from the governed. The Connecticut Civic Network will modernize and invigorate the manner in which citizens engage with our state government.

Introduction

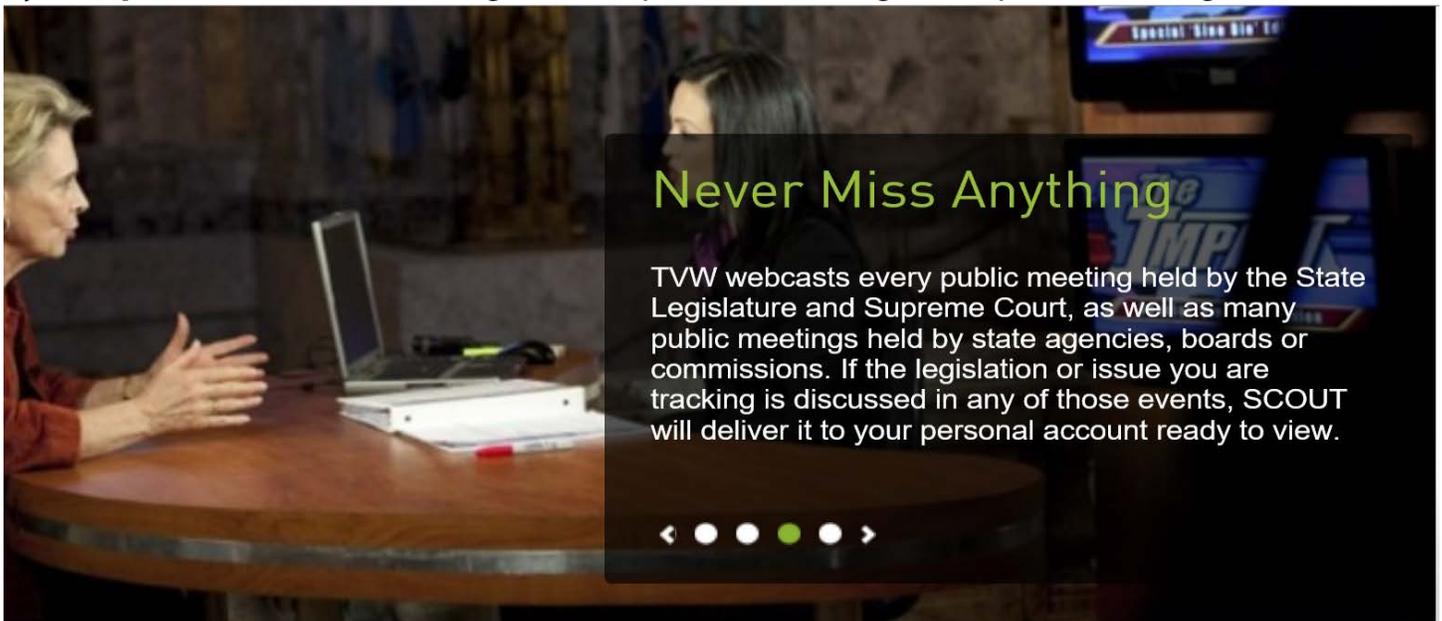
CT-N was developed in 1998 by the Connecticut Public Affairs Network (CPAN), with support from the Connecticut General Assembly. CPAN is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization incorporated in 1997 with a commitment to strengthening civic engagement by providing comprehensive and unbiased educational programming and outreach on state government, civics and citizenship.

After having been a national leader in providing citizens with access to information about the workings of state government, CT-N is no longer on the cutting edge.

On any given day during the legislative session, up to 80% of meetings or hearings in the LOB are not televised, and therefore inaccessible to the vast majority of people who are unable to attend in person.

Today, other states are using technology and programming options to enable their citizens to access the information about state government they want, when and how they deem most efficiently.

By Comparison, TVW in Washington state provides coverage of all public meetings.



TVW webpage

Connecticut's Challenge

Currently, CT-N is unable to provide Connecticut citizens greater access to information because:

- ***State budgetary constraints limit the opportunity for growth.***
- ***Lack of space in the Legislative Office Building, combined with the inability to control and manage equipment and infrastructure, limits the ability to update, anticipate and adapt to changes in technology and citizen needs.***
- ***Current contractual structure constrains speed of innovation, efficiency and cost effectiveness.***

Since the launch of CT-N in 1999, innovations such as broadband internet, high-definition TV, DVRs, mobile devices, smartphones, tablets, social media, YouTube, Netflix, Hulu, Roku, Apple TV and Google TV have changed the world. People's viewing habits have changed along with technology, favoring DVRs over "appointment TV", compressing prime time viewing to 3 hours at maximum, using TV, Internet and Mobile media interchangeably while integrating web surfing and social media into their viewing activity: *all of which makes viewers less likely than ever to watch an entire gavel-to-gavel proceeding on TV.*

In light of technological advances and changes in how citizens access information, CT-N must be redesigned to enhance the ability of citizens to be informed about and engaged in the democratic process.

This Connecticut Civic Network vision builds on the emerging best practices of the most successful state public affairs networks across the country and takes advantage of recent advances in technology to dramatically increase transparency in all three branches of Connecticut government.

Creating the Connecticut Civic Network

Legislation to be considered during the 2016 session will create the Connecticut Civic Network to provide unprecedented access to information about the three branches of state government, expanding citizen knowledge and participation in the democratic process.

An Act Creating a State Civic Network will:

- Define CT-N as a State Civic Network, pursuant to the Federal Cable Act (*47 U.S. Code § 531)
- Clearly define a regulatory structure and process through Connecticut's Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) that mirrors existing state statutes used to assign management of local community access channels to a non-profit entity.
- Establish the funding stream originally envisioned for CT-N in 1998, similar to those of C-SPAN and local community access, mirroring existing state statutes that have funded local community channels since the 1980s.
- Authorize PURA, through a regulatory process similar to existing state regulations, to establish and annually adjust the funding amount.
- Eliminate the need for state support, restoring **\$3,200,000** to the General Fund annually.
- Improve operational efficiencies by replacing the outdated contractual structure between the non-profit and the Legislative Branch with Operating Agreements and Reporting Requirements with the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches.
- Transfers the equipment and infrastructure responsibility to the non-profit for more efficient management and long-term planning.
- Establish a tri-branch advisory council to serve as liaison between the non-profit and officials from each branch of Connecticut government.

*47 U.S. Code § 531 states, in part, that the regulatory authority may require channel capacity and funding for public, educational or governmental uses. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/47/531>

The Connecticut Civic Network Vision, Branch by Branch

Legislative

As a State Civic Network, CT-N will increase the network's production capacity, using newly-available advances in technology to provide complete gavel-to-gavel coverage of **all** official legislative meetings and hearings occurring on the Capitol campus. Limitations to the network's current technology, staff and available production space in the LOB prevent CT-N from recording and live streaming more than two events at a time, one of which is selected to air live on the CT-N cable channel. This in turn limits CT-N coverage of the many concurrent legislative events taking place during a typical legislative session.

Upon full implementation, CT-N as a Connecticut Civic Network will record, live web-stream and archive **every** committee meeting, **every** committee hearing and **every** House and Senate session. A mobile-optimized CT-N website will make each live webstream available in real-time, as well as in a permanent video-on-demand archive accessible with the help of citizen access "search and share" tools described below. Content will also be accessible on the State Capitol Complex's in-house cable channel.

The array of webstreams and archive will be designed with cloud-based architecture to handle citizen access demand fluctuations and will include a permanent archive maintained with the appropriate level of redundancy.

To accomplish this, additional "production pod" work spaces will be constructed at the CPAN/CT-N production facility at 21 Oak Street to allow for the coverage of many more consecutive events. Pool feeds and digital video files will be available to all media.

Judicial

As the Connecticut Civic Network, CT-N will increase the network's production capacity, using newly-available advances in technology to provide complete gavel-to-gavel coverage of **all** Supreme Court and Appellate Court oral arguments. Technology, staff and Court infrastructure limitations have constrained CT-N's coverage of Judicial Branch oral arguments scheduled per year, especially during the legislative session when resources are heavily committed.

The State Civic Network will record, live web-stream and archive **every** Supreme Court oral argument and **every** Appellate Court oral argument permissible under the Judicial Branch Practice Book rules. A mobile-optimized CT-N website will make each live web-stream available in real-time, as well as in a permanent video-on-demand archive accessible with the help of citizen access "search and share" tools described below. CPAN/CT-N staff will continue to select events for live broadcast on the CT-N cable channel.

The web-streams and archive will be designed with cloud-based architecture to handle citizen access demand fluctuations with a permanent archive maintained with the appropriate level of redundancy.

To accomplish this, remotely-controlled cameras will be installed in the Supreme Court and Appellate Court chambers interconnected with the remote production pod work spaces described in the Legislative Branch section above. Pool feeds and digital video files will be available to all media.

Executive

As the Connecticut Civic Network, CT-N will increase the network's overall production capacity, using newly-available advances in technology to provide complete gavel-to-gavel coverage of many Executive Branch agency meetings, hearings and events – **including potential 100% coverage of certain key agencies.** Technology, staff and locational issues of state agency sites have generally constrained CT-N's ability to adequately cover Executive Branch agency events occurring around the state, especially during the legislative session when resources are heavily committed.

CPAN staff will work with the Governor's Office, state agency heads and commissioners to document the location and frequency of Executive Branch public meetings, hearings and events that are appropriate for gavel-to-gavel coverage. The State Civic Network will record, live web-stream and archive these events occurring in state office buildings around Connecticut. A mobile-optimized CT-N website will make each live web-stream available in real-time, as well as in a permanent video-on-demand archive accessible with the help of citizen access "search and share" tools described below. CPAN/CT-N staff will continue to select events for live broadcast on the CT-N cable channel. The web-streams and archive will be designed with cloud-based architecture to handle citizen access demand fluctuations and including a permanent archive maintained with the appropriate level of redundancy.

To accomplish this, remotely-controlled cameras will be installed in commonly-used meeting rooms in the designated state office buildings, interconnected to the remote production pod work spaces described above. With the state's recent acquisition of office buildings in Hartford and the proposed renovation of the State Office Building at 165 Capitol Avenue, all efforts should be taken to install the necessary infrastructure and cables into these sites as they are being readied for occupancy. CPAN will work with the Executive Branch to identify meeting spaces at state university and community college sites to better facilitate coverage of agency hearings occurring in communities around the state. Pool feeds and digital video files will be available to all media.

Search-and-Share Tools

The State Civic Network includes a robust content-management system that combines keyword- and agent-searchability of video with access to associated public documents (bills, testimony, transcripts, briefs, etc.) and shareability over email and social media in a single, integrated, easy-to-navigate user interface.

TVW – Washington state's public affairs network on which CT-N was originally modeled – has developed this kind of integrated platform using voice-recognition technology to perform the most arduous and otherwise-labor-intensive process of indexing the video content for search and document-reference. CPAN would seek to license TVW's product or a system like it and utilize its own closed captioning system to perform the same indexing function.

Public Policy Events around the State

Recognizing the role of citizens and non-governmental groups in the deliberative public policy process, the State Civic Network will provide increased capacity to cover events happening around the state that are not official government meetings but are an important part of the public debate. This will be accomplished through the use of multiple camera units transported to sites around the state with live signals being transmitted back to the CT-N Production Center through the use of mobile backpack video transmitters.

Live from Connecticut's Old State House – With CPAN also responsible for the educational and community programs at Connecticut's Old State House, a natural extension of the civic engagement goals of both CT-N and OSH is realized. Lectures, public forums and live Town Hall meetings produced by the Old State House staff and televised by CT-N provide opportunities to debate and discuss issues of importance while expanding the audience well beyond the walls of the original State Capitol.

Electoral Process Coverage

At its most fundamental level, we live in a democratic society whereby the laws we all agree to live by are crafted by us, the citizenry. We choose from our neighbors the people we believe will act in our best interest to develop, implement and enforce those laws. But in order for this system to work effectively, we all need to better understand the electoral process and the perspectives of candidates wishing to represent us at the Capitol. The State Civic Network provides opportunities for citizens to make informed choices in a manner free from paid political advertising through coverage of:

State Conventions – Live coverage of the state party nominating conventions

Debates – Working with local broadcasters to aggregate their coverage of “top of the ticket” debates for Governor and the state’s congressional seats, while working with community partners such as League of Women Voters to organize debates for under ticket races which largely go ignored by the mainstream news media.

Newspaper Editorial Board Interviews – Offering an inside view of the interviews by newspaper editorial boards with candidates seeking endorsement.

Public Affairs Programs

Consistent with national best practices, the Connecticut Civic Network will produce a variety of public affairs programs, supplementing CT-N’s gavel-to-gavel coverage with educational studio-based programs specifically produced to demystify the governmental process and provide additional context for citizens to better understand the issues. **Examples from TVW include:**



Key Collaborative Relationships

State Library

Imagine being able to watch video coverage of the Connecticut Constitutional Convention of 1818 when delegate Stephen Mix Mitchell took to the floor at the Old State House and made the case for opening the Senate sessions to the public for the first time. Although the House of Representatives sessions were always open to the public, the State Senate or Governor's Council as it was called, always met behind closed doors. "The doors shall be opened" was his proclamation, which began the debate on transparency in government that continues even today, almost 200 years later.

CT-N will explore partnerships with the Connecticut State Library, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut or other state-based digital storage repository, to maintain a complete, permanent, searchable and accessible archive of Connecticut state government history.

STEP UP for Vets

As the next phase of its long-standing commitment to workforce diversity, CPAN anticipates working closely with The Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program to hire returning veterans into a portion of the new positions that will be created through the implementation of State Civic Network. The likelihood of transferrable skills, particularly the technical skills associated with television production, and CPAN's core commitment to civic duty and public service make this an ideal fit for any staff expansion that will be necessary.

Connecticut's Community Colleges

CPAN will explore the feasibility of a community college work study program, providing college students with unique co-curricular opportunities for on-the-job training in video production and journalism while being immersed in the democratic process. This work study program may also qualify for federal eligibility to pay for a portion of salary costs for certain students.

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