

## VERMONT ACCESS NETWORK

25 February 2019

**MEMO TO:** Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee

**FROM:** Lauren-Glenn Davitian, CCTV Center for Media & Democracy

**RE:** State of Vermont Proposed FY20 Budget - Request for Study Committee Allocation

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Vermont's FY20 Budget. I am sorry that I cannot join you this evening.

My name is Lauren-Glenn Davitian, Executive Director of CCTV Center for Media & Democracy based in Burlington Vermont. We operate Channel 17/ Town Meeting Television, serving Chittenden County.

We are proud to be part of a statewide organization known as Vermont Access Network which represents 25 community media centers across the state, operating more than 80 public, educational and government (PEG) access channels.

Collectively, with members of our communities, we generate 18,000 hours of local programs each year, and utilize more than \$8 million in cable subscriber fees to provide community based programming (including municipal meetings and election coverage, which you are likely familiar with), supplement public education with media literacy and school coverage, and provide an open first come, first served free speech forum.

The state of Vermont has advanced PEG access as a public good for 35 years. There are several threats facing the continued open access of these PEG channels and community media centers that knit our state together. These threats diminish both the state's authority to manage its public rights-of-ways (where cable lines run) and will the vibrant local media network that serves communities across Vermont.

We have outlined [these threats](#) (coming from the FCC, federal courts and, soon, the Supreme Court) before several legislative committees and, as a way forward, have asked for a Study Committee to be established to examine these issues.

The House Energy and Technology Committee and Senate Finance Committee is currently looking at whether to include the [Study Committee](#) in legislation.

We are speaking tonight to let you know that this Study Committee is under consideration and it is likely that this Committee will require a modest appropriation to cover the participation of 2-3 legislators.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify. Thank you for your consideration.

**Documents for reference:**

- [Testimony](#) 2/25
- [Overview of PEG Issues](#)
- [Study Committee](#) Draft Proposal

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