

# CCTV Center for Media & Democracy

5 November 2021

Rep. Jill Krowinski, Chair  
Sen. Becca Balint, Vice Chair  
Sen. Dick Mazza  
Sen. Alison Clarkson  
Sen. Randy Brock  
Rep. Emily Long  
Rep. Michael McCarthy  
Rep. Patricia McCoy

Dear Members of Vermont Legislative Joint Rules Committee:

Please accept this testimony and request to participate in your next Joint Rules Committee meetings. This memo covers the advances in hybrid meeting coverage being made across Vermont and the need for the Vermont Legislature to take a modern approach to coverage and archiving of its legislative proceedings. Models from other states are included for discussion.

**At the start of the COVID19 health emergency,** democratic participation moved from town halls and legislative chambers to online meetings. Our leaders and citizens made this pivot quickly and became competent at running local democracy from their desk top computers.

**Today, as the pandemic abides,** Vermonters are making the shift to the next generation of democracy: the “hybrid” meetings which are able to include both in person and remote participation. As we speak, hybrid meeting “rooms” are being set up across the state by Vermont’s community media centers and their municipal, educational and community partners.

**In Chittenden County, for example,** Town Meeting TV has completed installations at Burlington, Winooski and South Burlington city halls, Essex Junction village

offices, and Essex and Williston town halls. Public meetings are live streamed, participation is enabled from both in person and remote audiences. Each meeting is archived and made available to the public on demand with certain licensing requirements.

**Our counterparts at Vermont's 23 other community media centers** are also maintaining the continuity of local democratic operations with comparable hybrid meeting installations in dozens of communities throughout Vermont.

**As a result of these changes, members of the public now expect that they can participate in local and state policy making "in person" and via remote formats.**

**The Vermont Legislature is now considering how to structure public access to legislative committee and chamber proceedings** which will have a direct impact on public access to policy decisions (via live testimony, viewing) and the historical record (via access to archived, easy to access recordings).

As champions of local democracy, who toil on the front lines, **we have some simple recommendations for you to consider as you update your rules and procedures.**

- As you open committee meetings to "in person" participation, ensure that there is continued remote audio/ video public access for the purpose of both observing and testifying.
- Make recordings of these meetings available on-demand for public viewing throughout the session in a widely accessed format, such as YouTube.
- Make recordings of the meetings available after the session in an easy to find, easy to use format.

- If you are concerned about use of the archived content, establish certain licensing conditions. These are set by state legislatures across the United States. We have attached some examples for your consideration.

**Remote access to local government is here to stay** and our practices need to reflect this new reality. Vermont's community media center leaders do not support any effort to foreclose public access to live committee hearings or archived materials.

As always, we are/ I am happy to speak on this further with you. It is not entirely clear to us who has jurisdiction on this matter, and so we hope we have found a receptive committee.

We also have comments to make on the wisdom of reviving a public video network along the lines of Vermont Interactive TV, so please let us know the proper venue for that discussion.

Sincerely,

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**Legislative Content Licencing Examples:**

CSPAN - <https://www.c-span.org/about/copyrightsAndLicensing/>

Colorado Channel - <https://www.coloradochannel.net/licensing-policy/>

Minnesota Legislature - <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/htv/tape.htm>

Ohio Legislature - <https://www.ohiochannel.org/legal/terms-of-use>

State Legislative Coverage Summary -

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/legislative-webcasts-and-broadcasts.aspx>