



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Broadcast Board Releases Report, Recommends Transformation of Legislative Broadcasts Into Independent State Governmental Public Affairs Channel

JOSÉ M. SERRANO November 15, 2009

Effective in January, Existing Legislative Broadcasts to Include all Legislative Hearings and Additional Enhancements

The New York State Legislature Joint Advisory Board on Broadcast of State Government Proceedings today released its initial report on the current legislative broadcasts and the expansion of such programming. The complete report is available on the Assembly and Senate websites. The Joint Advisory Board, Co-Chaired by Senator José M. Serrano and Assembly Majority Leader Ron Canestrari, was charged with expanding the content of the existing New York State legislative channel. The panel's key recommendation is the transformation of the existing dedicated legislative television channel into a fully-independent New York State government affairs channel modeled after C-SPAN. Many other states have implemented similar channels to broadcast a comprehensive selection of state government and public policy material. In addition, the Joint Advisory Board also announced today that there will be a significant enhancement of legislative coverage on the existing channel starting in January 2010, including the broadcast of all legislative hearings.

Senator José M. Serrano said: "The Joint Advisory Board hopes that the cable industry will promptly begin managing the broadcast and showing expanded legislative content, as well as programming from the executive and judicial branches. My highest priority for this channel is that it be completely free of any government appointees. I applaud Senator Bonacic, Senator Stewart-Cousins, and Senator Valesky for their work to ensure that we begin to restore the public's faith in the lawmaking process in a completely nonpartisan fashion. Furthermore, I would like to thank Assemblymember Canestrari and my Assembly colleagues for their continued commitment to greater transparency and accountability for our state government."

Assembly Majority Leader Ron Canestrari said: "The Assembly majority has worked to create an independent legislative television channel for more than 20 years. This channel will bring greater transparency and accountability by allowing New Yorkers a direct view of a variety of their state government in action. Our efforts have finally paid off, and the Assembly looks forward to working with its partners in state government and with the Cable Television Association of New York to transform our existing television channel into a full independent New York 'C-SPAN.'"

In January 2006, the Legislature worked in conjunction with New York's cable television operators to pioneer a state legislative proceedings channel that is now available on cable television systems across the state. This channel was intended to increase transparency and provide New Yorkers with greater access to legislative proceedings in the Senate and Assembly. It currently broadcasts the complete and unedited session proceedings of both houses of the Legislature, as well as other legislative proceedings.

The new channel will be created as an independent broadcast entity, based on the foundation of the existing legislative channel. In order to secure a specific timetable for this transformation, the Joint Advisory Board will be conducting public meetings with invited stakeholder and experts. The first meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 17, Room 124 Capitol, in Albany.

Cable Telecommunications Association of New York (CTANY) president Timothy Rooney said: "CTANY and its member companies look forward to working with the Legislature to continue the partnership on the governmental channel that we've had in the past. We are committed to working with the Joint Advisory Board and the entire Legislature and other stakeholders to ensure that the governmental channel evolves into a better public affairs resource."

NYPIRG Legislative Director Blair Horner said: "New York is another step closer to providing unfiltered televised access of its key legislative and state government workings. A New York State public affairs channel will bring state government into the living rooms of New Yorkers and through the 'sunshine effect' help improve the way it functions. Assemblyman Canestrari, Senator Serrano and their colleagues deserve praise for pushing to make this a non-partisan independent venture that will gain the public's trust."

Common Cause/NY Executive Director Susan Lerner said: “We applaud the Joint Advisory Board’s commitment, led by Senator José Serrano and Assembly Majority Leader Ron Canestrari, to open up the Legislative process with a public affairs channel so that ordinary New Yorkers can see and understand what their representatives do in Albany, as evidenced by the Joint Advisory Board’s initial report. Common Cause/NY, as a long-time proponent of a C-SPAN-type channel for New York State, looks forward to public discussions of the best way to realize this important goal. Our members throughout the state are committed to helping the Joint Advisory Board identify and operationalize best practices for New York.”

League of Women Voters of New York State Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti said: “This new cable venture is a significant step toward opening the doors of Albany to the public policy issues being debated. Finally, New Yorkers will have an opportunity to be better informed and to actively participate in the daily issues facing their elected representatives. A better informed citizenry makes for a better government. We applaud the actions of Senator Serrano, Assembly Member Canestrari and the members of the Joint Advisory Board on Broadcast of State Government Proceedings for their efforts.”

Citizens Union of the City of New York Executive Director Dick Dadey said: “Citizens Union is pleased that the State Legislature is moving forward with its promise to create a new and improved public government channel, which will create greater transparency of state government proceedings by allowing the public to view previously unseen footage of legislative hearings, committee meetings and deliberations, as well as similar footage from the executive and judicial branches. The first initial report sets a strong foundation for a successful state government channel, and with additional input through planned public meetings, we are confident that the new channel will allow New Yorkers to better understand the workings of state government and more actively engage in decision-making.”

“For too long the inner workings of the legislative process have been shrouded in secrecy,” Serrano said. “By lifting the curtain, not just on legislative session, but on other important parts of the legislative process, we are providing programming that enables the public to become engaged in the workings of government and to take informed positions on the issues that matter to them.”

“Expanding and transforming our televised proceedings requires the bipartisan bicameral approach of this advisory board,” Canestrari added. “I would like to thank all of the Joint Advisory Board members – in particular my Assembly colleagues Darryl Towns, Margaret Markey and Jane Corwin – for their efforts on this matter.”

The Joint Advisory Board on Broadcast of State Government Proceedings board was created under a joint rule of the Senate and Assembly and was directed to report to the Temporary President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Minority Leaders of the Senate and the Assembly to determine the efficacy of current legislative coverage.

Current cable television listings for legislative proceedings can be found at <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/av/cable.pdf>.