

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Congressional Radio-Television Correspondents' Galleries

Monday, April 16, 2007

Participants: Steve Chaggaris, Chair; Heather Dahl, Vice Chair; Brian Naylor; Linda Kenyon; Deidre Walsh; Jamie Dupree; Chad Pergram (via phone); Mike Mastrian, Director; Tina Tate, Director; Jeff Kent (Press Photographers Gallery); Joe Keenan (Print Press Gallery); Ed Pesce (Periodical Press Gallery); Heidi Glenn (Member Periodical Press Standing Committee); Scott Applewhite (Press Photographers Gallery Standing Committee); Susan Ferrichio (Print Gallery Standing Committee); Melinda Whittstock (CNC), Keith Carney (FEDNET).

Chair Steve Chaggaris opened the meeting at 1:03pm and recognized the House and Senate Gallery Directors so that they may give their reports.

Director Mastrian gave the following report:

Director's Report 4/16

Mike Mastrian, Director

Fiber Upgrades in Senate Committee Rooms – I am submitting the following list of the Senate committee rooms that have received a fiber upgrade:

Russell Office Building

SR-325 Caucus Room

Fiber pulled to room by RTKL

Uncertain if fiber appears at any locations in the room.

SR-253 Commerce Committee

Fiber pulled to room boxes and panels

Not terminated at Russell Attic

No alternate copper connectivity

Dirksen Senate Office Building

SD 366 Energy

Fiber pulled to room boxes and panels

Not terminated at Russell Attic

No alternate copper connectivity

SD 406 Environment and Public Works

Fiber pulled to room boxes and panels

Not terminated at Russell Attic

No alternate copper connectivity / Hallway dangler available

SD 419 Foreign Relations
Fiber pulled to room boxes and panels
No alternate copper connectivity / Hallway dangler available

SD 430 H.E.L.P.
Fiber currently being pulled
No alternate copper connectivity / Hallway dangler available

SD 538 Banking
Fiber pulled to room boxes and panels
Not terminated at either end
Temporary copper connectivity on temporary panel outside room

Interactive Credentialing Website – April is the month for credential renewal. This year all member organizations may apply for credentials through an interactive Web-based process. Gallery staff is currently receiving feedback regarding the use of its on-line credentialing database. When all feedback is received, I will report the results to the Executive Committee. Much of the feedback that is being received at this time focuses on the expeditious manner in which credential requests are handled.

Director Tate gave the following report:

Director's Report 4/16
Tina Tate, Director

WIRING ADVANCES

We expect to complete wiring two Appropriations room 2358 RHOB and 2359 RHOB and Homeland Security 311 CHOB during the August recess. We have begun the work on wiring H 210 in the Capitol for Speaker Pelosi press events. We expect that room to be completed by the end of May.

STAFF to NAB CONVENTION

Olga and Andy are attending the NAB Convention in Las Vegas to learn more about future electronic equipment. This is the third year they have attended. We benefited from what they learned when we had the CVC signage procurement. We will be making the final decision on the CVC electronic signage package later this month.

SOUTH DOOR

Sergeant at Arms will address use of the South Door by media carrying very portable gear such as tape recorders to insure the policy is consistent with Senate policy at the North Door.

NEW HIRE for House Gallery

The new CAO has requested the funding in Legislative Appropriations for the new hire with technical qualifications for the CVC.

Discussion of Credential Concerns with Print Reporters' Use of Video Cameras:

Steve Chaggaris: I want to address a lingering issue. The issue deals with credentialing members from print organizations who wish to use video cameras in order to cover news events on Capitol Hill. I am not interested in discussing Brian Wilson's proposal or anything that happened with CNN and Sen. Stevens. I would like to discuss who should carry video cameras in the Capitol. I think anyone who carries a video camera should have a Radio-TV Gallery credential. The other galleries say that when their members use video cameras, their members are subject to the rules. However, if a member of the print gallery breaks a rule, it's we who have to deal with the mess for example – The Politico.Com at the State of the Union. *So, I propose the following:*

Anyone who carries a camera for the intention of broadcasting, including broadcasting on the Internet, needs to be credentialed under the Radio-TV Galleries.

Brian Naylor: Can't an individual have two credentials – one for print, one for Radio-TV?

Steve Chaggaris: An organization may be credentialed to different galleries, but an individual may only hold one credential.

Brian Naylor: What if an editor asks on occasion for a print reporter to shoot something for the Web?

Steve Chaggaris: It would be my assertion that the reporter if he or she is broadcasting or cybercasting that he or she needs our credential.

Linda Kenyon: Have we received any feedback from The Politico.Com?

Steve Chaggaris: The Politico wants our credential. We would consider them like we did NYTIMES.Com

Chad Pergram: (via phone) What is needed is a unified policy in order to make others adhere to the rules – something similar to a "Taiwanese solution." Should we consider a special pass and/or a hybrid pass?

Linda Kenyon: Have we heard from Washington Post?

Mike Mastrian: WP plans to submit an accreditation request for its online product.

Steve Chaggaris: How do the still photographers deal with the issue of a print reporter who wants to use a video camera at a committee hearing? Do they have any issue with print reporters?

Jeff Kent: It depends on the hearing room. If there is little space for cameras in the room, I will ask them to refrain from being in the room. However, it's not a situation that has come up.

Steve Chaggaris: So, one solution might be to have print reporters request a camera position.

Mike Mastrian: It's important to know that one of the still photographers' bread-and-butter photos is taken from inside the dais well of committee hearing rooms.

Jamie Dupree: That doesn't address the other galleries issues with our cameras on the second floor of the Capitol.

Steve Chaggaris: Maybe we should help the print gallery with their broadcast coverage needs.

Heather Dahl: We need a uniform rule. There are too many shades of grey in the current rules.

Brian Naylor: We could produce a "cheat sheet" of the broadcast coverage rules for the other galleries.

Joe Keenan: I have informed my members that if they want to use a handheld camera that they are subject to the Radio-TV Gallery rules. 95% of print reporters should receive their credentials from the Print Gallery.

Steve Chaggaris: The Radio-TV Gallery is currently credentialing videographers from print organizations. (To Joe Keenan) Would you agree to formalizing a process which allows Radio-TV to credential videographers from print organizations?

Joe Keenan: Sure – as you have explained it.

Heather Dahl: What happens if a member of a print organization causes trouble by breaking the rules?

Joe Keenan: If the member has a print credential, the print gallery will deal with the problem.

Heather Dahl: Under what set of rules?

Jeff Kent: The problem has yet to be seen. The Press Photographers are waiting to see what problems arise before wanting to establish a uniform rule.

Heidi Glenn: The Periodical Press Gallery is sympathetic to the Radio-TV Gallery's need to address rules violations. However, I am hesitant to establish a standard punishment before we discuss a binding rule.

Scott Applewhite: I want to commend Heather Dahl. She has conducted herself in a professional manner, and I applaud her for being "forward thinking" on this issue. I don't understand why other journalists are not joining the discussion. As journalist, we have higher principles that should unite us and not let something as arcane as the tools we use divide us.

Ed Pesce: There should be more collaboration among gallery staff. The Politico should have checked in with the House Radio-TV Gallery in order to be in Statuary Hall for State of the Union.

Tina Tate: We do a lot of logistics work ahead of news events such as the State of the Union and the Gold Medal Ceremony.

Keith Carney: It's important to note that broadcast organizations incur costs in order to wire up committee rooms.

Jeff Kent: Pool costs are a larger issue. I am reluctant to put new rules in place when most news organizations are still experimenting with the new technology. The feedback that I am receiving from still photographers shows that it costs them too much to produce video

broadcasts. At this time, we are making “ad-hoc” agreements instead of rules.

Susan Ferrichio: Print reporters infrequently use cameras. We need to see more of the practice before a unified rule can be set.

Melinda Whittstock: Should we make print reporters sign something before they use a camera?

Steve Chaggaris: I think we should formalize some wording about print reporters that are hired as “full time” videographers.

Joe Keenan: Other print reporters are assigned to use cameras in a very informal and spontaneous manner.

Brian Naylor: These print reporters should know what they can or cannot do.

Steve Chaggaris: There are about 6,000 reporters among the four galleries. From this number, it’s not unusual to see 20 or more cameras. How confident are we in knowing who carries a camera?

Ed Pesce: We should scrutinize who uses a camera in order to avoid unintended rules violations.

Steve Chaggaris: Ultimately, it’s a management issue.

Jeff Kent: This type of management always happens within the Still Photographers’ Gallery.

Heather Dahl: Other gallery members seem to be more cavalier with the rules because the rules are not a part of their galleries. Reporters who use cameras are subject to the entire Radio-TV Gallery rule book.

Jeff Kent: Every gallery member understands “when the cat’s away the mice will play” approach to the rules. They all want to avoid unduly, burdensome rules.

Deidre Walsh: There seems to be a “rule vs. process” approach to coverage.

Steve Chaggaris: I’d like to thank everyone for today’s enlightening discussion. We will continue to discuss this matter.

Accreditation Requests from New Organizations:

The Executive Committee met with representatives from the following organizations:

Voxant - Jeff Crigler from Voxant was called back for a second time in order to clarify what he meant when he said that Voxant desired a credential in order to “plug into the pool.” Chairman Chaggaris questioned Mr. Crigler with respect to Voxant’s capability to cover hearings and other news events with its own camera crews. Mr. Crigler answered saying that he has hired a cameraman, and Voxant currently distributes a product to 2,000 distributions affiliates for example – Newsroom.com.
Steve Chaggaris said that a decision regarding Voxant’s accreditation request would be made by the end of the week.

NTV Russia - NTV Broadcasting Company is the biggest non-governmental TV-network in Russia. It covers the audience of approx. 100 million

people in countries of former Soviet Union. It is also the main Russian language channel broadcasted all over the world via satellite. We interviewed George Bush, Condoleezza Rice, John Ashcroft, James Baker, Mikhail Gorbachev, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Ariel Sharon, Mikhail Saakashvili, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paul McCartney, Madonna and many others. We cover all main political and social events every day and give the comments of the top newsmakers in NTV newscasts throughout the day. Anton Volskiy represented NTV Russia.

Steve Chaggaris said that a decision regarding NTV Russia's accreditation request would be made by the end of the week.

Public Service TV Taiwan – Public TV Service in Taiwan is a non-profit organization, whose main purpose is to have more educational programs and international vision to promote the quality of Taiwan's TV network. As to financial resources, Public TV Service is run by a non-profit foundation, whose members include scholars, representatives from disadvantaged minorities, and cultural experts. Taiwan's Public TV Service provides daily evening news for the past eight years. Since last year, the members of Public TV Service Foundation have reached a decision that Public TV Service should expand its vision in DC to educate Taiwan people concerning US democratic processes. The DC bureau of Public TV Service has started since August, 2006. The DC bureau chief of Public TV Service is Ching-Yi Chiang. She covers stories in DC mainly in respect of hearings and bills in the US Congress, as well as US-Taiwan relations making in the US government. Ching-Yi Chiang represented PTST.

Steve Chaggaris said that a decision regarding PTST's accreditation request would be made by the end of the week.

Russia Today - "RTTV America" is an independent organization, based in Washington, D.C., delivering news content on a regular basis to Moscow-based television channel "Russia Today." "Russia Today" is a 24/7 English-language news channel, broadcasting news and feature stories with a focus on Russia. Live streaming of the broadcast can be viewed at www.rttv.ru. Christina Mursa represented Russia Today.

Steve Chaggaris said that a decision regarding Russia Today's accreditation request would be made by the end of the week.

