

C-SPAN II

SENATE TV ANNIVERSARY

"There is no conceivable way that televising the Senate, no matter how numerically small the viewing audience, cannot foster more interest and awareness of the legislative process in this country."

Tom Shales
THE WASHINGTON POST
June 3, 1986

WHEN IT BEGAN...

Senate television's public test period began on June 2, 1986; the proceedings were carried live via satellite over cable television's C-SPAN II. A vote on July 29, 1986 made Senate television permanent.

A FEW SENATE TV MILESTONES...

1986	
June 24	First Major Debate: Tax reform was the first major debate on the Senate floor to be beamed into living rooms nationwide.
Aug. 11-15	First Filibuster: Sustained debate over aid to the <i>contras</i> and South African sanctions amendments attached to the military construction appropriations bill.
Oct. 9	First Impeachment Trial in 50 years: Nevada Judge Harry E. Claiborne was tried and convicted on three articles of impeachment and removed from his life-tenured federal judgeship by the Senate, before a nationwide television audience.

1987	
Jan. 6	First Change of Leadership: The Republicans lost control of the Senate when Democrats gained a majority after the '86 midterm elections.

SENATE MAKEOVERS FOR TELEVISION...

- Reduced "Special Order" speeches (given by Senators at the start of each day's session on any topic) from 15 minutes to five
- Limited the debate period, from 100 to 30 hours, after the legislators invoke "cloture" to end a filibuster
- Added official Senate flag to the left of the presiding officer
- Relit chamber to improve telegenicity
- Updated audio system, providing individual microphones for senators to speak from their desks. Mike clips for female senators were added to the traditional tie clips.

TELEVISIONING THE SENATE...

- The Senate recording studio staff uses six remote control cameras to telecast the proceedings, with plans to add two more. The Senate feed is carried directly into congressional offices on Capitol Hill.
- The Senate makes its video feed available to accredited members of the Radio/TV Gallery. C-SPAN II is the only organization that carries the proceedings live and in their entirety.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS...

- C-SPAN II carried over 1000 hours of live, gavel-to-gavel Senate proceedings in its first year.

TALLYING THE SUBSCRIBERS...

- C-SPAN II is available to over 9 million households on 400 cable systems nationwide -- a growth of 20% since its launch in June 1986.

WHO'S WATCHING, WHO'S NOT...

- States with *highest* C-SPAN II penetration

-Alaska
-Colorado
-Connecticut
-Maryland
-Minnesota

- States with *lowest* C-SPAN II penetration

-Arkansas
-Hawaii
-Montana
-Nevada
-Vermont

SENATORS SPEAK OUT...

"They are making better speeches... Overall, the debate has improved from a substantive standpoint."

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV)
Majority Leader

"Today the U.S. Senate catches-up with the 20th Century...Thanks to television, viewers can now dial in [their] democracy."

Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS)
Minority Leader

A CHANGE OF HEART...

"I think it has worked well. Some of the fears that I and others had, have not materialized. I think Senate TV has been a success."

Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-LA)
*One of twenty-one senators
who voted against Senate TV*

STILL OPPOSED...

"Nobody, and I mean nobody, is watching TV Senate coverage...[It] may drive *Sominex* off the market, but it is not performing any useful function for our country."

Sen. William Proxmire (D-WI)
*One of twenty-one senators
who voted against Senate TV*

WHAT VIEWERS ARE SAYING...

"As an economics major at the University of Maryland, I monitor C-SPAN II for pertinent and timely issues. C-SPAN II provides a great service."

College Student
Landover, Maryland

"I'll tell you I'm watching both of your channels on two sets. I'm watching one on the cable system here in Logan and the other one here on my dish that I put in specifically so I could watch the Senate."

Retired Air Force Officer
Logan, Utah

"I am a new subscriber to C-SPAN II and have become hooked. Often I view the Senate sessions into the wee hours of the morning. I am starting to get a handle on what transpires in our government."

Business Woman
Memphis, Tennessee

"June 2, 1986 brought [the] Senate to us on TV. I'm again proud to be an American. I think we have many efficient and dedicated statesmen in our Senate."

Housewife and Mother
Tulsa, Oklahoma

"I really enjoy watching my government in action. The Senate is a little more orderly as opposed to the House, where they really go at each other."

Former Vietnam Combat Medic
Modesto, California

C-SPAN II

SENATE TV ANNIVERSARY

"There is no conceivable way that televising the Senate, no matter how numerically small the viewing audience, cannot foster more interest and awareness of the legislative process in this country."

Tom Shales
THE WASHINGTON POST
June 3, 1986

WHEN IT BEGAN...

Senate television's public test period began on June 2, 1986; the proceedings were carried live via satellite over cable television's C-SPAN II. A vote on July 29, 1986 made Senate television permanent.

A FEW SENATE TV MILESTONES...

1986

- June 24** **First Major Debate:** Tax reform was the first major debate on the Senate floor to be beamed into living rooms nationwide.
- Aug. 11-15** **First Filibuster:** Sustained debate over aid to the *contras* and South African sanctions amendments attached to the military construction appropriations bill.
- Oct. 9** **First Impeachment Trial** in 50 years: Nevada Judge Harry E. Claiborne was tried and convicted on three articles of impeachment and removed from his life-tenured federal judgeship by the Senate, before a nationwide television audience.

1987

- Jan. 6** **First Change of Leadership:** The Republicans lost control of the Senate when Democrats gained a majority after the '86 midterm elections.

SENATE MAKEOVERS FOR TELEVISION...

- Reduced "Special Order" speeches (given by Senators at the start of each day's session on any topic) from 15 minutes to five
- Limited the debate period, from 100 to 30 hours, after the legislators invoke "cloture" to end a filibuster
- Added official Senate flag to the left of the presiding officer
- Relit chamber to improve telegenicity
- Updated audio system, providing individual microphones for senators to speak from their desks. Mike clips for female senators were added to the traditional tie clips.

TELEVISIONING THE SENATE...

- The Senate recording studio staff uses six remote control cameras to telecast the proceedings, with plans to add two more. The Senate feed is carried directly into congressional offices on Capitol Hill.
- The Senate makes its video feed available to accredited members of the Radio/TV Gallery. C-SPAN II is the only organization that carries the proceedings live and in their entirety.

TALLYING THE NUMBERS...

- C-SPAN II carried over **1000** hours of live, gavel-to-gavel Senate proceedings in its first year.

TALLYING THE SUBSCRIBERS...

- C-SPAN II is available to over **9 million** households on **400 cable systems** nationwide -- a growth of 20% since its launch in June 1986.

WHO'S WATCHING, WHO'S NOT...

- States with *highest* C-SPAN II penetration
 - Alaska
 - Colorado
 - Connecticut
 - Maryland
 - Minnesota

- States with *lowest* C-SPAN II penetration
 - Arkansas
 - Hawaii
 - Montana
 - Nevada
 - Vermont

SENATORS SPEAK OUT...

"They are making better speeches... Overall, the debate has improved from a substantive standpoint."

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV)
Majority Leader

"Today the U.S. Senate catches-up with the 20th Century...Thanks to television, viewers can now dial in [their] democracy."

Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS)
Minority Leader

A CHANGE OF HEART...

"I think it has worked well. Some of the fears that I and others had, have not materialized. I think Senate TV has been a success."

Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-LA)
*One of twenty-one senators
who voted against Senate TV*

STILL OPPOSED...

"Nobody, and I mean nobody, is watching TV Senate coverage...[It] may drive *Sominex* off the market, but it is not performing any useful function for our country."

Sen. William Proxmire (D-WI)
*One of twenty-one senators
who voted against Senate TV*

WHAT VIEWERS ARE SAYING...

"As an economics major at the University of Maryland, I monitor C-SPAN II for pertinent and timely issues. C-SPAN II provides a great service."

College Student
Landover, Maryland

"I'll tell you I'm watching both of your channels on two sets. I'm watching one on the cable system here in Logan and the other one here on my dish that I put in specifically so I could watch the Senate."

Retired Air Force Officer
Logan, Utah

"I am a new subscriber to C-SPAN II and have become hooked. Often I view the Senate sessions into the wee hours of the morning. I am starting to get a handle on what transpires in our government."

Business Woman
Memphis, Tennessee

"June 2, 1986 brought [the] Senate to us on TV. I'm again proud to be an American. I think we have many efficient and dedicated statesmen in our Senate."

Housewife and Mother
Tulsa, Oklahoma

"I really enjoy watching my government in action. The Senate is a little more orderly as opposed to the House, where they really go at each other."

Former Vietnam Combat Medic
Modesto, California

C-SPAN II

Subscribers listed by state and the percentage of cable subscribers who receive C-SPAN II

STATE	BASIC SUBS	C-SPAN II SUBS	% PENETRATION
ALABAMA	643,654	101,286	16%
ALASKA	72,256	33,000	46%
ARIZONA	476,766	193,516	41%
ARKANSAS	411,600	0	0%
CALIFORNIA	4,237,495	1,198,176	28%
COLORADO	540,573	307,488	57%
CONNECTICUT	769,462	354,431	46%
DELAWARE	149,430	25,585	17%
DC	5,500	2,663	48%
FLORIDA	2,599,234	411,375	16%
GEORGIA	986,789	127,840	13%
HAWAII	237,633	0	0%
IDAHO	169,892	32,630	19%
ILLINOIS	1,473,391	545,075	37%
INDIANA	924,525	185,918	20%
IOWA	477,850	97,185	20%
KANSAS	639,397	65,211	10%
KENTUCKY	689,036	138,755	20%
LOUISIANA	798,269	16,315	2%
MAINE	212,087	39,590	19%
MARYLAND	509,565	340,722	67%
MASSACHUSETTS	1,051,695	444,016	42%
MICHIGAN	1,367,422	360,914	26%
MINNESOTA	522,420	268,474	51%
MISSISSIPPI	489,173	54,776	11%
MISSOURI	604,783	166,879	28%
MONTANA	158,960	0	0%
NEBRASKA	318,063	121,298	38%
NEVADA	149,608	0	0%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	208,082	13,903	7%
NEW JERSEY	1,528,637	196,908	13%
NEW MEXICO	249,351	103,240	41%
NEW YORK	2,646,628	247,366	9%
NORTH CAROLINA	1,012,090	211,091	21%
NORTH DAKOTA	131,712	24,998	19%
OHIO	1,987,908	460,985	23%
OKLAHOMA	500,223	140,333	28%
OREGON	533,133	154,663	29%
PENNSYLVANIA	2,258,552	337,911	15%
RHODE ISLAND	193,774	23,337	12%
SOUTH CAROLINA	473,330	19,919	4%
SOUTH DAKOTA	114,771	13,661	12%
TENNESSEE	772,657	213,347	28%
TEXAS	2,669,005	653,677	24%
UTAH	163,897	2,251	1%
VERMONT	96,084	0	0%
VIRGINIA	1,020,503	222,385	22%
WASHINGTON	834,178	73,863	9%
WEST VIRGINIA	451,908	42,850	9%
WISCONSIN	688,765	205,204	30%
WYOMING	130,225	7,929	6%
TOTAL	40,451,935	9,002,939	22%



Washington, D.C. 20540

Congressional Research Service
The Library of Congress

This material has been prepared in response to the requester's instructions with respect to conclusions, inclusions, or assumptions. It should not be understood or represented as presenting the views or findings of the Congressional Research Service or of the author.

SENATE TELEVISION: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Prepared at the Request of Senator Robert Byrd

Ilona B. Nickels
Analyst in American National Government
Government Division
May 29, 1987

DIRECTED PRINTING

SENATE TELEVISION: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Mr. President, last year I stated in this chamber that the coming of television to the United States Senate was not an occurrence to be feared--it was an opportunity to be seized. It was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the public; it was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the media; it was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the students of this country who were watching videotaped curriculum on Congress in which they saw only the House of Representatives.

Today we commemorate one year of live broadcasts of Senate floor proceedings to the public. Mr. President, we are still in the transition period. One year has not seen the full worth of televised proceedings realized. We are in a transition to a better public understanding of Senate procedures and traditions. We are in a transition to a better balance of perception that two chambers make up the Congress. We are in a transition to a better balance of media coverage of the Congress as a whole. We are in a transition to increased educational use of videotaped floor proceedings. It is an exciting time because it is a time of becoming and beginning.

I am confident that the Senate's experience with television has dispelled the dire predictions that television would bring the Senate to a grinding halt. I have noticed no ill effects on or major alterations in the conduct of our business. Perhaps the Senate has suffered stoppage from time to time, but it

is not because of televising its proceedings. Those episodes may have more to do with the split party control between the White House and the Congress. Admittedly, neither has television smoothed Senate floor proceedings, because efficiency is not in the nature of a deliberative body driven by the competitive principles of majority control and minority protections. None of this arrived with television; it preceded it. It would be misguided to expect that which is inherent to the Senate to be changed by the introduction of television or any other technology. Inherent features are permanent. On the other hand, unlike some--I think few in number--in this body, I continue to maintain that television's positive contributions will become more and more apparent with the passage of time.

The Senator from Wisconsin has stated that Senate TV is a failure because "nobody is watching." That's one Senator's subjective belief. My subjective view is exactly the opposite. My office gets calls on a regular basis--from across the country--commenting on my performance while I am speaking on the Senate floor. These viewers are kindly calling to encourage me while I am still delivering my remarks, and at times, they have called to not so kindly challenge me. But they call. Perhaps other Senators have their own subjective views to share here today. But, Mr. President, let's turn from those kinds of subjective comparisons and let us take a hard look at the facts. Just who is watching--state by state? What kind of growth in viewership of Senate floor proceedings has there been over the past year? To what end? Does that growth have a positive effect on our system of participatory democracy? Does that growth have a positive effect on our educational system? Has that growth had a positive, negative, or no effect on the very nature of Senate floor activity? These are the questions that deserve our serious examination.

Let me begin by describing to Senators just who our audience is.

Mr. President, only C-Span II, the second C-Span channel devoted to Senate floor coverage, telecasts Senate proceedings live and in their entirety. All other news organizations have access to the live Senate feed and they use as little or as much of it as they like in their normal coverage of the Congress. Because only C-Span II carries us live and unedited, that network and its viewers will be my primary focus.

C-Span II, the Senate channel, was created in June 1986 to carry live, complete, and unedited telecasts of Senate proceedings. It is available to those cable systems that already offer C-Span, the House channel, to their subscribers. C-Span II began with 180 affiliated cable systems. Today, at the end of one year, 400 affiliated cable systems offer the Senate channel. The growth has been dramatic and shows no signs of diminishing. In fact, I am told that improving satellite access in the coming year will encourage even more growth. Within the cable television industry, C-Span II, the Senate channel, is the fastest growing new cable service.

One year ago, there were 7.5 million households receiving C-Span II. Today there are 9.2 million households receiving C-Span II through an affiliated cable system. In addition, we have viewers who watch us through the benefits of backyard satellite dishes. Adding in those independent viewers, we have an audience of 11 million households, with a cable industry calculated average of 2.6 viewers per household.

By contrast, Mr. President, C-Span, the House channel, began with 3.5 million households and at the end of its first year, rose to 5 million viewers. So we are holding our own with the House after our first year, in fact we did a little better. And we started off with a substantially higher audience.

Mr. President, at this point I would like to ask unanimous consent to insert into the Record a chart provided me by the C-Span network, which I think Senators will find very educational. It provides, for each of our 50 states, the number of cable television households, the number of those households receiving the Senate channel, the number of those households receiving the House channel, the percentage of cable television households which receive the Senate channel, and the ranking of each state vis-a-vis the others. The chart notes that there are more than 205,204 "nobodys" watching the Senate channel in Wisconsin. Out of the 50 states, Wisconsin ranks 12th in its viewership of the Senate channel. My own state does not fare so well. We are the 39th state in terms of viewership. Only 9 percent of our cable television households receive the Senate channel. Yet, at a minimum, 42,850 West Virginia viewers are watching the Senate at any one time.

However, Mr. President, I do not find this the least bit discouraging. I am keeping my eyes on a higher goal and on future achievements less tangible than the statistics immediately available to us. I remember the words of the Washington Post's television critic when we began televising our floor proceedings last year. He wrote then, "There is no conceivable way that televising the Senate, no matter how numerically small the viewing audience, cannot foster more interest and awareness of the legislative process in this country." He was right. In the past year, C-Span has received over 1200 requests from high schools and universities for help in demonstrating ways that C-Span taped coverage can be incorporated into courses on law, politics, history, and journalism. I am reminded of the statement of the late television pioneer, Edward R. Murrow, who said, "The instrument can teach, it can illuminate." 1200 teachers, Mr. President, are searching for a way to do just

that. One C-Span viewer summarized this encouraging educational trend well when she wrote in to the network's newspaper: "C-Span is more than America's network, it is a university . . . for all of us to attend, learn, and form our own opinions to help keep alive the free exchange of ideas and the right to learn."

So, Mr. President, I am not at all discouraged when looking at this chart. And I hope that the Senators from the great states of Arkansas, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, and Vermont keep my remarks very much in mind as they look at this chart. I also hope that the Senators from Maryland, Colorado, Minnesota, Alaska, and Connecticut do not begin to live on the Senate floor after they look at this chart. These numbers have been a year in the making, Mr. President, and are what the industry terms "dynamic". This time next year, we may well have a very different picture before us. All of the numbers will be higher, but the relationships between states will undoubtedly have changed.

Over the past year, C-Span II carried over 1000 hours of live, gavel-to-gavel Senate proceedings in its first year. What are the viewers saying about us after seeing the Senate in action for 1,000 hours? Last year, in making my case for Senate television, I stated that we are doing the people's business here and that we do not need to fear their scrutiny because we are a body of able and intelligent people. I based my belief on the fact that whenever we have given the public a chance to observe us closely through broadcasts, they have responded favorably, with increased respect for our institution. That was true of the Kefauver crime investigation hearings in 1951, the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954, the labor racketeering hearings in 1957, the Fulbright hearings on the Vietnam War in 1966, the Senate Watergate Committee hearings in 1973, the House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings in 1974, the radio

broadcasts of the Senate debate to ratify the Panama Canal Treaties in 1978, the impeachment trial of Judge Harry Claiborne in 1986, and the Iran-Contra hearings in 1987. In none of these historic television broadcasts did the image of the United States Congress suffer nor did the confidence of the American people in this institution falter because of them. Instead, our standing was enhanced and the confidence of the public in us strengthened. I am please to report to Senators that C-Span viewers are mature enough to take us warts and all and that we have survived their scrutiny. Perhaps they have learned that the modern filibuster does not resemble the portrayal in the movie, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington". Perhaps they have learned, as I have, more than they wanted to know about the non-debatable motion to proceed during the Morning Hour. But the comments they have called in to the network and written in to the network's newspaper, the C-Span Update, have been balanced. When we're good they like us, and even when we're bad, they like us because we're the real thing. A local Massachusetts television critic wrote: "That's not an actor playing at being a Senator; that's a real Senator. The script is being written as we watch." Maybe we're more exciting than we think, Mr. President.

A C-Span viewer from California wrote in to say: "I've been impressed by the statesmanship of many of the Senators and appalled by the ignorance and arrogance of others. Listening to issues being debated and watching votes that directly affect every American has been a valuable learning experience. . . . "

A Maryland C-Span viewer calling into a C-Span talk show stated on the air that, "The differences between the House and Senate that are there, I think, were meant to be there. The Senate was meant to be much slower and more deliberate. However, electronic voting would make it better." Mr. President, I

hope Senators take note of the wisdom of those last remarks! They were endorsed by another viewer from Nebraska, who said: "I'd have to put my vote in for C-Span II as the better of the two channels. I like it because of the length of time the Senators can speak. You really get to see both sides of the subject in detail. The only changes I would suggest is the electronic voting that everyone is talking about." Another California viewer called in to say: "I really enjoy watching my government in action. The Senate is a little more orderly as opposed to the House . . . , where they really go at each other." These comments, Mr. President, all reflect that we have neither conned nor dazzled the American people. They see us as we are. We are not perfect, but we are perfectly acceptable. I, for one, am encouraged by their maturity.

That maturity is understandable when we look at the demographic studies done on C-Span viewers. We are told that 93 percent of them voted in the 1984 elections, as compared to 53 percent of the general electorate. They are also high consumers of news, spending more time reading newspapers and watching TV news than the average non-cable subscriber. They are generally more active in politics, better educated, and wealthier than the population at large. The predominant group of viewers is male, from 25-53 years old. Eleven percent of C-Span viewers were found to be older retired people or college teachers.

However, Mr. President, I suspect that the most avid viewers are a group that did not get surveyed. The most avid viewers might well be scattered throughout the Capitol complex. They are watching in the Russell Building, the Dirksen Building, and the Hart Building. They are watching in the Madison Building and the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. And, Mr. President, I have even heard of some curious viewers tuning in from the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn Buildings. Senators no longer need to walk onto the

floor "cold". They have been viewing from their offices. Staff no longer need to rely on cloakroom tapes as they brief their bosses leaving committee hearings to come to the floor. They have been watching from their desks. Perhaps the House has begun to think the "other body" does more than trade unanimous consent requests back and forth. Senate floor telecasts have certainly made it easier for many of us on Capital Hill to juggle our many responsibilities and have enhanced our ability to do our jobs well.

What Senate telecasts have not done is dramatically change the way we do business on the floor. Last year, the Congressional Research Service published a study of the time spent on the Senate floor on certain procedural activities before television and after the immediate advent of television. I have asked my staff to update and expand that study, and here is what we have found.

[THIS SECTION TO BE INSERTED BY SENATE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE STAFF,
AT THE SENATOR'S REQUEST.]

In conclusion, Mr. President, Senate television is still in transition. I am patient as I wait for the full benefits to come. Senate television will transform our educational process. It will transform our democratic process. It will transform the nation-wide, and even the world-wide perceptions of our institution. I think it has improved life around here. I invite all Senators, as they look at that small, colorful screen and evaluate the past year, to keep their eyes on the big picture. Thank you, Mr. President.

IBN:db

C-SPAN/C-SPAN II AFFILIATES

May 28, 1987

OF CABLE HOUSEHOLDS

STATE	BASIC SUBS (CABLE HOUSEHOLDS)	C-SPAN SUBS (HOUSE CHANNEL)	C-SPAN II SUBS (SENATE CHANNEL)	PERCENT for C-SPAN II	RANKING BY STATE
Alabama	643,654	325,616	101,286	16	30
Alaska	72,256	55,170	33,000	46	5
Arizona	476,766	382,823	193,516	41	8
Arkansas	411,600	203,108	0	0	
California	4,237,495	3,158,992	1,198,176	28	14
Colorado	540,573	490,868	307,488	57	2
Connecticut	769,462	717,765	354,431	46	5
Delaware	149,430	20,117	25,585	17	29
District of Columbia	5,500	2,831	2,663	48	4
Florida	2,599,234	1,891,578	411,375	16	30
Georgia	986,789	492,850	127,840	13	33
Hawaii	237,633	193,082	0	0	
Idaho	169,892	103,080	32,630	19	26
Illinois	1,473,391	1,591,250	545,075	37	11
Indiana	924,525	603,581	185,918	20	23
Iowa	477,850	344,495	97,185	20	23
Kansas	639,397	338,755	65,211	10	38
Kentucky	689,036	454,292	138,755	20	23
Louisiana	798,269	476,026	16,315	2	45
Maine	212,087	67,805	39,590	19	26
Maryland	509,565	392,771	340,722	67	1
Massachusetts	1,051,695	1,075,852	444,016	42	7
Michigan	1,367,422	1,177,068	360,914	26	17
Minnesota	522,420	431,747	268,474	51	3
Mississippi	489,173	112,305	54,776	11	37
Missouri	604,783	553,613	166,879	28	14
Montana	158,960	107,431	0	0	
Nebraska	318,063	235,302	121,298	38	10
Nevada	149,608	188,099	0	0	
New Hampshire	208,082	166,077	13,903	7	42
New Jersey	1,528,637	1,130,293	196,908	13	33
New Mexico	249,351	137,815	103,240	41	8
New York	2,646,628	1,735,245	247,366	9	39
North Carolina	1,012,090	497,687	211,091	21	22
North Dakota	131,712	44,156	24,998	19	26
Ohio	1,987,908	1,382,101	460,985	23	19
Oklahoma	500,223	394,641	140,333	23	19
Oregon	533,133	374,241	154,663	29	13
Pennsylvania	2,258,552	1,195,033	337,911	15	32
Rhode Island	193,774	152,576	23,337	12	35
South Carolina	473,330	298,693	19,919	4	44
South Dakota	114,771	82,557	13,661	12	35
Tennessee	772,657	406,751	213,347	28	14
Texas	2,669,005	1,972,813	653,677	24	18
Utah	163,897	135,080	2,251	1	46
Vermont	96,084	50,301	0	0	
Virginia	1,020,053	774,359	222,385	22	21
Washington	834,178	677,555	73,863	9	39
West Virginia	451,908	151,346	42,850	9	39
Wisconsin	688,765	564,811	205,204	30	12
Wyoming	130,225	50,742	7,929	6	43
TOTAL	40,451,935	28,563,145	9,002,939	22	



Washington, D.C. 20540

Congressional Research Service
The Library of Congress

This material has been prepared in response to the requester's instructions with respect to conclusions, inclusions, or assumptions. It should not be understood or represented as presenting the views or findings of the Congressional Research Service or of the author.

SENATE TELEVISION: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Prepared at the Request of Senator Robert Byrd

Ilona B. Nickels
Analyst in American National Government
Government Division
May 29, 1987

UNRESTRICTED PRINTINGS

SENATE TELEVISION: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Mr. President, last year I stated in this chamber that the coming of television to the United States Senate was not an occurrence to be feared--it was an opportunity to be seized. It was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the public; it was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the media; it was an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate in the eyes of the students of this country who were watching videotaped curriculums on Congress in which they saw only the House of Representatives.

Today we commemorate one year of live broadcasts of Senate floor proceedings to the public. Mr. President, we are still in the transition period. One year has not seen the full worth of televised proceedings realized. We are in a transition to a better public understanding of Senate procedures and traditions. We are in a transition to a better balance of perception that two chambers make up the Congress. We are in a transition to a better balance of media coverage of the Congress as a whole. We are in a transition to increased educational use of videotaped floor proceedings. It is an exciting time because it is a time of becoming and beginning.

I am confident that the Senate's experience with television has dispelled the dire predictions that television would bring the Senate to a grinding halt. I have noticed no ill effects on or major alterations in the conduct of our business. Perhaps the Senate has suffered stoppage from time to time, but it

is not because of televising its proceedings. Those episodes may have more to do with the split party control between the White House and the Congress. Admittedly, neither has television smoothed Senate floor proceedings, because efficiency is not in the nature of a deliberative body driven by the competitive principles of majority control and minority protections. None of this arrived with television; it preceded it. It would be misguided to expect that which is inherent to the Senate to be changed by the introduction of television or any other technology. Inherent features are permanent. On the other hand, unlike some--I think few in number--in this body, I continue to maintain that television's positive contributions will become more and more apparent with the passage of time.

The Senator from Wisconsin has stated that Senate TV is a failure because "nobody is watching." That's one Senator's subjective belief. My subjective view is exactly the opposite. My office gets calls on a regular basis--from across the country--commenting on my performance while I am speaking on the Senate floor. These viewers are kindly calling to encourage me while I am still delivering my remarks, and at times, they have called to not so kindly challenge me. But they call. Perhaps other Senators have their own subjective views to share here today. But, Mr. President, let's turn from those kinds of subjective comparisons and let us take a hard look at the facts. Just who is watching--state by state? What kind of growth in viewership of Senate floor proceedings has there been over the past year? To what end? Does that growth have a positive effect on our system of participatory democracy? Does that growth have a positive effect on our educational system? Has that growth had a positive, negative, or no effect on the very nature of Senate floor activity? These are the questions that deserve our serious examination.

Let me begin by describing to Senators just who our audience is.

Mr. President, only C-Span II, the second C-Span channel devoted to Senate floor coverage, telecasts Senate proceedings live and in their entirety. All other news organizations have access to the live Senate feed and they use as little or as much of it as they like in their normal coverage of the Congress. Because only C-Span II carries us live and unedited, that network and its viewers will be my primary focus.

C-Span II, the Senate channel, was created in June 1986 to carry live, complete, and unedited telecasts of Senate proceedings. It is available to those cable systems that already offer C-Span, the House channel, to their subscribers. C-Span II began with 180 affiliated cable systems. Today, at the end of one year, 400 affiliated cable systems offer the Senate channel. The growth has been dramatic and shows no signs of diminishing. In fact, I am told that improving satellite access in the coming year will encourage even more growth. Within the cable television industry, C-Span II, the Senate channel, is the fastest growing new cable service.

One year ago, there were 7.5 million households receiving C-Span II. Today there are 9.2 million households receiving C-Span II through an affiliated cable system. In addition, we have viewers who watch us through the benefits of backyard satellite dishes. Adding in those independent viewers, we have an audience of 11 million households, with a cable industry calculated average of 2.6 viewers per household.

By contrast, Mr. President, C-Span, the House channel, began with 3.5 million households and at the end of its first year, rose to 5 million viewers. So we are holding our own with the House after our first year, in fact we did a little better. And we started off with a substantially higher audience.

Mr. President, at this point I would like to ask unanimous consent to insert into the Record a chart provided me by the C-Span network, which I think Senators will find very educational. It provides, for each of our 50 states, the number of cable television households, the number of those households receiving the Senate channel, the number of those households receiving the House channel, the percentage of cable television households which receive the Senate channel, and the ranking of each state vis-a-vis the others. The chart notes that there are more than 205,204 "nobodys" watching the Senate channel in Wisconsin. Out of the 50 states, Wisconsin ranks 12th in its viewership of the Senate channel. My own state does not fare so well. We are the 39th state in terms of viewership. Only 9 percent of our cable television households receive the Senate channel. Yet, at a minimum, 42,850 West Virginia viewers are watching the Senate at any one time.

However, Mr. President, I do not find this the least bit discouraging. I am keeping my eyes on a higher goal and on future achievements less tangible than the statistics immediately available to us. I remember the words of the Washington Post's television critic when we began televising our floor proceedings last year. He wrote then, "There is no conceivable way that televising the Senate, no matter how numerically small the viewing audience, cannot foster more interest and awareness of the legislative process in this country." He was right. In the past year, C-Span has received over 1200 requests from high schools and universities for help in demonstrating ways that C-Span taped coverage can be incorporated into courses on law, politics, history, and journalism. I am reminded of the statement of the late television pioneer, Edward R. Murrow, who said, "The instrument can teach, it can illuminate." 1200 teachers, Mr. President, are searching for a way to do just

that. One C-Span viewer summarized this encouraging educational trend well when she wrote in to the network's newspaper: "C-Span is more than America's network, it is a university . . . for all of us to attend, learn, and form our own opinions to help keep alive the free exchange of ideas and the right to learn."

So, Mr. President, I am not at all discouraged when looking at this chart. And I hope that the Senators from the great states of Arkansas, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, and Vermont keep my remarks very much in mind as they look at this chart. I also hope that the Senators from Maryland, Colorado, Minnesota, Alaska, and Connecticut do not begin to live on the Senate floor after they look at this chart. These numbers have been a year in the making, Mr. President, and are what the industry terms "dynamic". This time next year, we may well have a very different picture before us. All of the numbers will be higher, but the relationships between states will undoubtedly have changed.

Over the past year, C-Span II carried over 1000 hours of live, gavel-to-gavel Senate proceedings in its first year. What are the viewers saying about us after seeing the Senate in action for 1,000 hours? Last year, in making my case for Senate television, I stated that we are doing the people's business here and that we do not need to fear their scrutiny because we are a body of able and intelligent people. I based my belief on the fact that whenever we have given the public a chance to observe us closely through broadcasts, they have responded favorably, with increased respect for our institution. That was true of the Kefauver crime investigation hearings in 1951, the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954, the labor racketeering hearings in 1957, the Fulbright hearings on the Vietnam War in 1966, the Senate Watergate Committee hearings in 1973, the House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings in 1974, the radio

broadcasts of the Senate debate to ratify the Panama Canal Treaties in 1978, the impeachment trial of Judge Harry Claiborne in 1986, and the Iran-Contra hearings in 1987. In none of these historic television broadcasts did the image of the United States Congress suffer nor did the confidence of the American people in this institution falter because of them. Instead, our standing was enhanced and the confidence of the public in us strengthened. I am please to report to Senators that C-Span viewers are mature enough to take us warts and all and that we have survived their scrutiny. Perhaps they have learned that the modern filibuster does not resemble the portrayal in the movie, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington". Perhaps they have learned, as I have, more than they wanted to know about the non-debatable motion to proceed during the Morning Hour. But the comments they have called in to the network and written in to the network's newspaper, the C-Span Update, have been balanced. When we're good they like us, and even when we're bad, they like us because we're the real thing. A local Massachusetts television critic wrote: "That's not an actor playing at being a Senator; that's a real Senator. The script is being written as we watch." Maybe we're more exciting than we think, Mr. President.

A C-Span viewer from California wrote in to say: "I've been impressed by the statesmanship of many of the Senators and appalled by the ignorance and arrogance of others. Listening to issues being debated and watching votes that directly affect every American has been a valuable learning experience. . . ."

A Maryland C-Span viewer calling into a C-Span talk show stated on the air that, "The differences between the House and Senate that are there, I think, were meant to be there. The Senate was meant to be much slower and more deliberate. However, electronic voting would make it better." Mr. President, I

hope Senators take note of the wisdom of those last remarks! They were endorsed by another viewer from Nebraska, who said: "I'd have to put my vote in for C-Span II as the better of the two channels. I like it because of the length of time the Senators can speak. You really get to see both sides of the subject in detail. The only changes I would suggest is the electronic voting that everyone is talking about." Another California viewer called in to say: "I really enjoy watching my government in action. The Senate is a little more orderly as opposed to the House . . . , where they really go at each other." These comments, Mr. President, all reflect that we have neither conned nor dazzled the American people. They see us as we are. We are not perfect, but we are perfectly acceptable. I, for one, am encouraged by their maturity.

That maturity is understandable when we look at the demographic studies done on C-Span viewers. We are told that 93 percent of them voted in the 1984 elections, as compared to 53 percent of the general electorate. They are also high consumers of news, spending more time reading newspapers and watching TV news than the average non-cable subscriber. They are generally more active in politics, better educated, and wealthier than the population at large. The predominant group of viewers is male, from 25-53 years old. Eleven percent of C-Span viewers were found to be older retired people or college teachers.

However, Mr. President, I suspect that the most avid viewers are a group that did not get surveyed. The most avid viewers might well be scattered throughout the Capitol complex. They are watching in the Russell Building, the Dirksen Building, and the Hart Building. They are watching in the Madison Building and the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. And, Mr. President, I have even heard of some curious viewers tuning in from the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn Buildings. Senators no longer need to walk onto the

floor "cold". They have been viewing from their offices. Staff no longer need to rely on cloakroom tapes as they brief their bosses leaving committee hearings to come to the floor. They have been watching from their desks. Perhaps the House has begun to think the "other body" does more than trade unanimous consent requests back and forth. Senate floor telecasts have certainly made it easier for many of us on Capital Hill to juggle our many responsibilities and have enhanced our ability to do our jobs well.

What Senate telecasts have not done is dramatically change the way we do business on the floor. Last year, the Congressional Research Service published a study of the time spent on the Senate floor on certain procedural activities before television and after the immediate advent of television. I have asked my staff to update and expand that study, and here is what we have found.

[THIS SECTION TO BE INSERTED BY SENATE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE STAFF, AT THE SENATOR'S REQUEST.]

In conclusion, Mr. President, Senate television is still in transition. I am patient as I wait for the full benefits to come. Senate television will transform our educational process. It will transform our democratic process. It will transform the nation-wide, and even the world-wide perceptions of our institution. I think it has improved life around here. I invite all Senators, as they look at that small, colorful screen and evaluate the past year, to keep their eyes on the big picture. Thank you, Mr. President.

IBN:db

C-SPAN/C-SPAN II AFFILIATES

May 28, 1987

OF CABLE HOUSEHOLDS

STATE	BASIC SUBS (CABLE HOUSEHOLDS)	C-SPAN SUBS (HOUSE CHANNEL)	C-SPAN II SUBS (SENATE CHANNEL)	PERCENT for C-SPAN II	RANKING BY STATE
Alabama	643,654	325,616	101,286	16	30
Alaska	72,256	55,170	33,000	46	5
Arizona	476,766	382,823	193,516	41	8
Arkansas	411,600	203,108	0	0	
California	4,237,495	3,158,992	1,198,176	28	14
Colorado	540,573	490,868	307,488	57	2
Connecticut	769,462	717,765	354,431	46	5
Delaware	149,430	20,117	25,585	17	29
District of Columbia	5,500	2,831	2,663	48	4
Florida	2,599,234	1,891,578	411,375	16	30
Georgia	986,789	492,850	127,840	13	33
Hawaii	237,633	193,082	0	0	
Idaho	169,892	103,080	32,630	19	26
Illinois	1,473,391	1,591,250	545,075	37	11
Indiana	924,525	603,581	185,918	20	23
Iowa	477,850	344,495	97,185	20	23
Kansas	639,397	338,755	65,211	10	38
Kentucky	689,036	454,292	138,755	20	23
Louisiana	798,269	476,026	16,315	2	45
Maine	212,087	67,805	39,590	19	26
Maryland	509,565	392,771	340,722	67	1
Massachusetts	1,051,695	1,075,852	444,016	42	7
Michigan	1,367,422	1,177,068	360,914	26	17
Minnesota	522,420	431,747	268,474	51	3
Mississippi	489,173	112,305	54,776	11	37
Missouri	604,783	553,613	166,879	28	14
Montana	158,960	107,431	0	0	
Nebraska	318,063	235,302	121,298	38	10
Nevada	149,608	188,099	0	0	
New Hampshire	208,082	166,077	13,903	7	42
New Jersey	1,528,637	1,130,293	196,908	13	33
New Mexico	249,351	137,815	103,240	41	8
New York	2,646,628	1,735,245	247,366	9	39
North Carolina	1,012,090	497,687	211,091	21	22
North Dakota	131,712	44,156	24,998	19	26
Ohio	1,987,908	1,382,101	460,985	23	19
Oklahoma	500,223	394,641	140,333	23	19
Oregon	533,133	374,241	154,663	29	13
Pennsylvania	2,258,552	1,195,033	337,911	15	32
Rhode Island	193,774	152,576	23,337	12	35
South Carolina	473,330	298,693	19,919	4	44
South Dakota	114,771	82,557	13,661	12	35
Tennessee	772,657	406,751	213,347	28	14
Texas	2,669,005	1,972,813	653,677	24	18
Utah	163,897	135,080	2,251	1	46
Vermont	96,084	50,301	0	0	
Virginia	1,020,053	774,359	222,385	22	21
Washington	834,178	677,555	73,863	9	39
West Virginia	451,908	151,346	42,850	9	39
Wisconsin	688,765	564,811	205,204	30	12
Wyoming	130,225	50,742	7,929	6	43
TOTAL	40,451,935	28,563,145	9,002,939	22	