

C-SPAN II

[1987]

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...

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- 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.
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- 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