

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RADIO-TELEVISION CORRESPONDENTS' GALLERIES

February 22nd, 2007  
Senate Radio-TV Gallery Studio

Executive Committee members:  
Steve Chaggaris, CBS, Chair; Heather Dahl, Fox, Vice Chair; Jamie Dupree, Cox Radio;  
Linda Kenyon, SRN Radio; Brian Naylor, NPR; Deirdre Walsh, CNN

Staff Present:  
House Gallery: Tina Tate, Olga Ramirez Kornacki  
Senate Gallery: Mike Mastrian, Michael Lawrence

*Chairman Steve Chaggaris called the meeting to order at 1:12pm*

## **1. Continued Consideration of Previous Accreditation Applications**

Chairman Chaggaris started by revisiting the pending credential applications from the Executive Committee meeting of January 26:

### **Politico.com:**

Vice Chair Heather Dahl reported no response from attempts to engage the print galleries in a dialogue about shared credentialing issues. Ms. Dahl agreed to send letters to the Print and Periodical Galleries' Standing Committees. Chairman Chaggaris suggested carrying over any decision on the Politico application to a later date

**It was the consensus of the Committee to hold over any decision on the application of Politico.com**

### **Gannett News Service:**

**The Executive Committee voted unanimously to approve the application for accreditation of Gannett**

**Telesur:**

Noting that this application was an appeal of a previously rejected application, the Committee agreed that the news content of Telesur had been subsequently verified. Chairman Chaggaris noted that it was not the role of the Committee to determine the degree to which foreign broadcast organizations are state-controlled. Senate Gallery Director Mike Mastrian recalled that former Chairman Mike Viqueira had previously suggested that the independence of foreign broadcast organizations be verified at the time of credential renewal. Mr. Mastrian said that several attempts at such vetting were met with hostile reaction. Brian Naylor requested that a break-out listing of accredited foreign broadcast organizations be provided, and Mr. Mastrian agreed to do that.

**The Executive Committee voted 6-to-1 in favor of approving the application for accreditation of Telesur. (Chad Pergram voting in the negative.)**

**Truthout.org:**

Chairman Steve Chaggaris started the discussion of Truthout.org's application by reporting to the Committee that he had been present at a DNC candidates' event and had personally seen one of the two representatives of Truthout.org present at the event with an anti-war logo on his jacket. When asked whether this individual was involved in news coverage at the time Chairman Chaggaris observed him, Chaggaris said no. But for Mr. Chaggaris, this was sufficient evidence that this individual, and Truthout.org, was involved in advocacy, and it was clear to him that the organization has a left bias.

**The Executive Committee voted unanimously to deny accreditation to Truthout.org**

**2. Report on Internship Program Development**

Chairman Chaggaris and Vice Chair Heather Dahl offered initial details of their plan for a new internship/scholarship program to replace the defunct RTNDF (Radio Television News Directors Foundation) Gallery internship program. The new proposal is for a competitive scholarship program for two or three college juniors who would be chosen to spend one week of their senior year in Washington, to coincide with the RTCA Annual Dinner. Each member of the Executive Committee (or their designee) would be responsible for providing guidance and activities for the interns for one day of the week in Washington. The Executive Committee would fund the program, including a stipend for each intern, transportation to and from, and housing in, Washington. Heather Dahl gave an estimated total cost of five thousand dollars per intern. The work of publicizing the program, and the selection process would be handled by the RTNDF.

Chairman Chaggaris and Vice Chair Dahl were steadfast in supporting the proposal in subsequent discussion. For Chaggaris, the program would further his intent to raise the visibility of the RTCA. For Dahl, the program represents an opportunity to reach out to young people, to play a philanthropic role, and to “carry out the vision” of the RTCA.

Committee member Jamie Dupree offered the most astringent criticisms of the plan. He cited liability concerns, and felt that the program ran far afield of the RTCA’s central mission. He and Committee member Brian Naylor questioned the program’s clear value to the RTCA. A lengthy and vigorous discussion ensued.

When pressed by some Committee members for more details, Vice Chair Dahl suggested that further planning would only be feasible if the Committee indicated a strong base of support for the project.

A motion was offered by Mr. Dupree to postpone all further consideration of the internship/scholarship proposal indefinitely. The motion was not seconded.

**A motion was offered for Chaggaris and Dahl to continue to study the internship/scholarship idea, and to bring to the full Committee three complete and detailed proposals for further consideration in April. The motion was seconded, and was agreed to by a vote of 6 to 1 (Jamie Dupree voting in the negative.)**

### **3. New Business**

#### Guests for Executive Committee Meetings:

Chairman Chaggaris suggested that the Executive Committee invite guests to future Committee meetings. Those guests might include Congressional Leadership press secretaries, USCP Chief, or the Sergeant at Arms.

**The Executive Committee voted unanimously to have Chairman Chaggaris draft invitation letters to those and other individuals.**

#### Informing RTCA Membership of Meetings / Meeting Minutes Posted:

Committee member Linda Kenyon suggested that an effort be made to inform all accredited members of the Congressional Radio-TV Galleries of the date, time, and location of meetings of the Executive Committee of Correspondents. (*See related action of the Executive Committee at meeting of January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007*). Linda Kenyon such notification could include posting signs in the Large Gallery Studios and elsewhere. There was also some discussion of posting the minutes of the Executive Committee on a Website. Senate Gallery Director Mike Mastrian said he had an e-mail list for the entire Gallery membership, though there were some technical difficulties that made sending notification to every member somewhat time consuming. Chairman Chaggaris said he would draft the text of an e-mail message one week in advance of the Committee's next meeting.

#### Booth Usage Audit:

Linda Kenyon inquired about the status of the Gallery booth usage audit. (*See related action of the Executive Committee at meeting of January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007*) Senate Gallery Director Mike Mastrian said he would provide such an audit the next Executive Committee meeting.

#### RTCA Website Proposal

Chairman Chaggaris followed up on his discussion from the January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Executive Committee meeting regarding his efforts for the acquisition of a domain name, and creation of a Website for the RTCA. He said that such a site could be useful in announcing future meetings of the Executive Committee of Correspondents..

**By unanimous agreement, the Executive Committee approved the establishment of a domain name, the creation of a static page with links to Senate and House Radio-TV Gallery Websites, and to further investigate the development of that RTCA Website.**

#### Radio Access in House Chamber Corridors

Committee Member Chad Pergram raised the issue of radio reporter access in corridors surrounding the House Chamber, and near the Speaker's Office. He said he has been approached by USCP officers while conducting interviews in certain areas.

House Gallery Director Tina Tate said that the new House Leadership might well be amenable to a relaxing of access rules. Tina Tate agreed to arrange a meeting between the Gallery and the Speaker's Office, and the Parliamentarian's Office. Steve Chaggaris and Brian Naylor both offered to join in the meeting.

Purchase of Televisions for the Senate Gallery Studio and Mezzanine.

**The Executive Committee unanimously approved the request of Mike Mastrian to purchase four or five television sets to replace those units that are non-functional.**

**4. House Gallery Director's Report** *(As submitted)*

NEW COMMITTEE ROOMS:

We have met with staffs from Appropriations, Homeland Security and Agriculture Committees in an effort to get these last main committee rooms wired for television. We are hoping with the assistance of the CAO/AOC personnel we can finally bring these rooms on line. We are also trying to move the Speaker's office on wiring for H 210, the Speaker's ceremonial office, since we anticipate Madame Speaker will be using this room for press events in the future.

NEW HOUSE OFFICERS:

Lorraine Miller has been named Clerk of the House effective last week. She is the first African American and the second woman to serve as Clerk. She has been on the Hill in various leadership offices for years. Daniel P. Beard has been named Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). He has a distinguished background having worked on the House side, Senate side, Carter administration, non-profit organizations and for profit organizations. He is working very closely with Jay Eagen, our former CAO, and has asked all CAO staff to stay on and assist him in running this large organization. AT this time we are pleased with his appointment and at the same time sorry to see Jay Eagen leave since he put the office on a non-partisan, professional footing for the first time in history. He came by the office yesterday to see our facilities and meet the staff. We discussed the new hire for the CVC and were assured that the previous practice of the Executive Committee hiring and recommending to the CAO for appointment will continue.

CVC:

NBC personnel brought Scecon staff to survey the big studio in the CVC. Scecon is the contracting firm that the NBC has hired to build the backdrop. We have made the selection of chairs and are proceeding with finishes such as drapes for Studio A and B. Following this meeting I will be meeting with the second company who will be still in the running for providing the signage for vestibule and the rear area. Olga and Andy now have CVC credentials and we have started the process to have several TASC members credentialed including Tom Seem, Peter Doherty, and Larry Gaetano. This should make it much easier for all concerned as we get closer and closer to the completion of our space. However, the lead on the CVC is the estimated time of completion has now slipped to summer 2008.

## **5. Next Meeting of the Executive Committee**

By consensus, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Executive Committee of Correspondents is set for Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 1:00PM in the House Gallery Studio.

**The Meeting of the Executive Committee was adjourned at 2:45 pm.**