
Chapter 6

Conclusion: WPTV and Legislature at Critical Juncture

Until now, the state's investment has not significantly supported WPTV infrastructure.

WPTV has grown from a regional program with a limited focus to a statewide service with a broad mission. Up to now, the state's investment in WPTV has supported a dedicated and resourceful staff; it has not significantly supported the infrastructure development necessary to spread WPTV's signal throughout the state. That staff, with ample latitude from its CWC governance, has expanded the station's coverage so that most Wyoming residents can receive the signal. According to the industry rating reported by WPTV, from 32,000 to 37,000 households in the state tune in.

Without additional funding for its digital conversion, WPTV will revert to a regional program.

Now, the nationwide conversion of television signals from analog to digital format places both the station and state policy makers at a critical juncture. Without additional funding above the approximately \$2.8 million thus far received or requested from the state for digital conversion, the station will revert to covering a limited area with its signal. By funding the digital conversion to the extent requested in the 2001 and 2002 Sessions, the Legislature will ensure that CWC can continue to operate WPTV beyond 2006. However, it will not ensure that the entire state continues to benefit from WPTV's broadcast and future digital enhancements.

Policymakers may want to consider how the station can contribute to the state as a state-funded benefit.

This potential raises the profile of WPTV in the state. For the first time, WPTV is asking the state to become a significant contributor to the network infrastructure. Given this, it may also be the time policymakers decide if WPTV is to have a future as a state-funded benefit, and if so, to articulate how the station can contribute to the state. The governance options discussed in Chapter 1 provide avenues through which the Legislature might proceed.