

**THE VERMONT  
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**NY GROUPS MOVE INTO VT**

North Country Public Radio, based in Canton, NY, is continuing its expansion, and now has a new signal in Bristol, VT.

WXLQ-FM signed on last month at 90.5 MHz and will simulcast NCPB programming. The Bristol frequency is the St. Lawrence University group's seventh main transmitter, and first in Vermont.

Listeners in the Addison County area previously could listen to WXLU at 88.1 from Peru, NY, but station officials say the new station will provide better reception.

Meanwhile, the FCC has granted a construction permit to a Plattsburgh-based religious group to operate a station in St. Albans, VT, also at 90.5 mhz. The Adirondack Center for Peace won the right to broadcast from St. Albans. According to FCC data, the Center for Peace is owned by Catholic author Linda Bracy of Plattsburgh.

**REMEMBERING FREYNE**

A memorial service was held Jan. 29 in Burlington for longtime columnist and radio reporter Peter Freyne. Freyne passed away Jan. 6 from pneumonia. He had battled cancer in recent years. The iconoclastic columnist had been a radio news reporter for WDOT, WKDR, WDEV and other stations. He was also a regular panelist on VPT's "Vermont This Week" program. He was 59.



Peter Freyne 1949–2009  
(Photo courtesy Seven Days)

# The VAB Voice



February, 2009

## DELAY OR NOT, LOCAL TV READY FOR DIGITAL

Congress has taken all those interested in the DTV transition on a roller coaster ride worthy of Coney Island, and the ride's not over yet. At press time, it appeared that the U.S. House would again consider a bill to delay the official DTV transition from Feb. 17 to June 12.

The Senate approved such a bill on a unanimous voice vote last month, but the bill's backers failed to muster the two-thirds vote needed in the House to suspend the rules to bring the issue forward. Now a DTV delay bill is taking the usual trip through a House committee, and then to the floor this week where it will only need simple majority support. So by the time you read this, it's very likely that a new DTV deadline will be in effect.

The legislation, if passed, will allow for early transitions, as long as sufficient notice is given to both the public and the FCC. Normally a change such as this would require at least a 30 day window, but the FCC has indicated it is willing to waive the requirement for



TV stations that are ready to make the switch now.

The bill is also expected to reauthorize the DTV coupon program. Currently, anyone requesting a \$40 coupon towards the purchase of a DTV converter box has to put their name on a waiting list.



It looks like most, if not all, stations in the Burlington/Plattsburgh market will make the switch on or around the original date of Feb. 17. Part of the reason is financial. Keeping analog transmitters going past their expected shutdown date would be a major fiscal undertaking, and would certainly cost more jobs.

And there are technical reasons to make the switch on time for local broadcasters. WCAX-TV probably has the most complex situation, and needed to have crews on hand on Feb. 1 on Mount Mansfield to make the switch. WCAX-TV is currently broadcasting its digital channels on UHF 53, but will switch to UHF 22 when it completes the transition.

Here is a list of stations with their old and new frequencies:

3 WCAX Digital from Mt. Mansfield is UHF 53 now and will be UHF 22 after analog ends.

5 WPTZ Digital from Mt. Mansfield is UHF 14.

31 WNNE Digital from Mt. Ascutney is UHF 25

22 WVTB Digital from Mt. Mansfield is VHF 13.

44 WFFF Digital from Mt. Mansfield is UHF 43.

57 WCFE Mountain Lake PBS Digital from Lyon Mt is UHF 38.

33 WETK Vermont Public Television (Burlington) Digital from Mt. Mansfield is UHF 32.

20 WVTB VPT (St. Johnsbury) Digital from Burke Mt. is UHF 18.

41 WVTA VPT (Windsor) Digital from Mt. Ascutney is UHF 24.



**JULIUS GENACHOWSKI  
POISED TO BECOME  
NEW FCC CHAIRMAN**

Sources in the Obama administration have indicated that a Harvard classmate of the new president will be the choice to replace Kevin Martin as FCC Chairman.

Julius Genachowski is a former chief counsel to former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt and helped raise \$500,000 for President Obama's campaign.



Julius Genachowski

Genachowski, 46, has been a technology adviser to Obama, and has been involved in internet startups and sits on the board of companies such as The Motley Fool, Website Pros and Beliefnet.

Martin, meanwhile, has announced he will be joining the Aspen Institute, a non-partisan think tank. The news doesn't come as a big surprise. Martin's three immediate predecessors, Hundt, William Kennard and Michael Powell, also joined the think tank after finishing their terms.

**ECONOMY FORCES LOCAL LAYOFFS**

Like most economic sectors, the broadcasting industry is facing a slowdown as the recession continues.

Declines in advertising and underwriting revenues have prompted layoffs at a score of local broadcast outlets.

Late last month, the sluggish economy took its toll on longtime DJ Steve Cormier of WCVP. Afternoon jock Carolyn Lloyd was also let go by the station. Some stations have decided to let vacant job shifts go unfilled for the time being.

On the TV side, first-ever layoffs were reported at WCAX and WFFF. Belt-tightening also prompted VPT to lay off Fran Stoddard, the longtime host of the "Profiles" program.

While this is obviously a time for concern in the industry, we have to remember the economy works in cycles.

Together, we can all look for innovative, creative ways to boost revenues. By operating more efficiently, our local broadcasters will be better prepared to ride the first waves of an economic rebound.

While it's hard to guess exactly when that rebound will come, we do know it will come!

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

To help boost bottom lines, we urge all stations to attend the VAB convention this May 7. Sales guru Chris Lytle will be presenting two seminars on ways to inspire your sales staffs to succeed in a down economy.



Bounce Back with Chris Lytle

Lytle's money-generating, career-building strategies are being used by salespeople and sales managers in 33 countries. His proven strategies have made him an internationally recognized expert in the area of sales and sales management, and he is noted internationally for cramming his programs full of actionable ideas.

We'll also have seminars from advertising expert Jeffrey Hedquist and programming tips from morning show maven Valerie Geller.

By sharing ideas and working together, Vermont's broadcasters can help beat the recession blues and get the economy rolling once again.

**FCC CRACKS DOWN ON  
OVERLY-COMMERCIAL  
UNDERWRITING SPOTS**

Last month, the FCC issued several fines to non-commercial broadcasters who had underwriting announcements that sounded too commercial. The announcements did not conform to the FCC's rules requiring that the announcements cannot contain qualitative claims about the sponsor, nor can they contain "calls to action" suggesting that listeners patronize the sponsor.

Underwriting announcements can identify the sponsor, say what the business of the sponsor is, and give a location (seemingly including a website address). But the announcements cannot do anything that would specifically encourage patronage of the sponsor's business. They cannot contain a "call to action," they cannot contain any qualitative statements about the sponsor and cannot contain price information about products sold by a sponsor.

In one of the cases, the Commission stated the announcements cannot be too long, as that in and of itself makes the spot seem overly promotional. The spot that was criticized was approximately 60 seconds in length.

- David Oxenford

