

VAB Voice | Monday, March 1, 2021



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Prayers Needed for a Broadcast Colleague



Vermont's Christian Ministries stations "The Light" Radio Network, informed the VAB on Friday that their Morning Show co-host/Promotions Director, Heather Sheppard, is fighting for her life intubated in the ICU at UVM Medical Center with COVID-19. They are asking all of us to please pray for Heather as she really needs a miracle right now.

Prayers worked for our friend and charter member of the VAB Hall of Fame Ken Squier, who had a life-threatening battle with COVID a few months ago. We hear he is still in long-term rehab, but is doing very well and there is a plan for him to get out and go home soon.

Please join the VAB in sending your thoughts and prayers to Heather to make it through this as well as to Ken for a full recovery.

VAB Pursues *First Informer* Status for Broadcasters

The Honorable Phil Scott
Governor
100 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609



February 26, 2021

Dear Governor Scott,

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, local broadcast television and radio stations have been committed to keeping Vermonters well informed with extended local news coverage, airing of press conferences, interviews with public officials and public service announcements about where to find critical supplies and how to stop the spread. At a time when "fake news" runs rampant on social media and conjecture is presented as fact on cable news networks, it's local reporters on Vermont's TV stations and local personalities on Vermont's radio stations that both the Government and Vermonters rely on to disseminate timely, reliable, unbiased and accurate information.

It is under this premise we ask you to consider issuing an Executive Order giving broadcasters *First Informer* status. Used in Missouri, Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Nevada, Idaho, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Georgia and South Carolina, this status ensures that essential workers in the broadcast industry have the requisite access needed to keep Vermonters informed during severe weather, emergencies, disasters and times of crisis. It calls for a protocol to be established whereby essential broadcast workers are issued an official *First Informer* credential that is recognized and honored by state and local law enforcement on the scene during severe weather, emergency, disaster or crisis. Essential broadcast workers include but are not limited to journalists and camera operators traveling to and from breaking news scenes as well as engineers and station operators traveling to and from antennas, transmitters, generators, tower sites and/or studios to keep stations functioning. These credentials can either be produced and distributed by Vermont Department of Public Safety or by the Vermont Association of Broadcasters with cooperation and approval by VT DPS.

COVID-19 guidance from the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) included radio and television broadcasters as Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers. In March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic, they issued a letter for broadcasters to carry with them urging law enforcement not to restrict travel to and from stations, tower sites, etc., but acknowledged the Federal letter had no authority or jurisdiction with state or local law enforcement. Recently, the CISA asked the Vermont Association of Broadcasters to compile a database of Critical Infrastructure in the Communications Sector, again acknowledging the importance of maintaining the critical communication service broadcast television and radio provide.

Broadcasters respect the critical work of First Responders and Emergency Managers in times of crisis and are not proposing a "carte blanche" all access pass. We are asking for a *First Informer* status credential and protocol accepted and recognized by state and local law enforcement identifying accredited members of the media, broadcast engineers and station operators in order to provide accurate and timely information Vermonters deserve no matter the situation.

Watch a powerful video demonstrating the indispensable role local broadcasters serve as "first informers" during times of emergency at <https://youtu.be/7vch8k0a504>

Please show your appreciation for the service Vermont Broadcasters provide by issuing a "First Informer" Executive Order so that we may have the full cooperation of the Vermont Department of Public Safety and Vermont Emergency Management to develop a "First Informer" access protocol.

Sincerely,

Wendy Mays
Executive Director
Vermont Association of Broadcasters

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In a letter submitted this past Friday, the VAB asked Governor Scott to issue an Executive Order giving broadcasters "First Informer Status".

Used in various forms in Washington, Missouri, Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Nevada, Idaho, Arkansas, Wisconsin and Georgia, this status ensures that essential workers in the broadcast industry have the requisite access needed to keep Vermonters informed during severe weather, emergencies, disasters and times of crisis. It calls for a protocol to be established whereby essential broadcast workers are issued an official *First Informer* credential that is recognized and honored by state and local law enforcement on the scene during severe weather, emergency, disaster or crisis.

Updates on the status of this request will be shared in future issues of the VAB Voice.

[Read the letter and more on this subject](#)

VAB Subsidizing 100% of the \$500 ABIP Fee!

The FCC routinely inspects radio and television stations for a

Alternative Broadcast Inspection Program



variety of technical issues at random and without warning.

Every three years, the VAB offers the Alternative Broadcast Inspection Program (ABIP) to help stations ensure they are in compliance with FCC regulations, and 2021 is an ABIP year. Stations that pass the ABIP program receive a certified 3-year exemption from routine FCC technical inspections.

Recognizing the financial stress COVID-19 has put on stations, the VAB is subsidizing 100% of the \$500 fee for members in good standing this year. Non-members may also take advantage of ABIP at the regular cost of \$500. Get step-by-step details on how to participate at <https://vab.org/abip>

[DOWNLOAD AGREEMENT](#)

Representation from NEK, Central & Southern VT Needed VAB Membership Committee



VAB Membership Committee is meeting Wednesday, March 10th from 3-4 PM via ZOOM.

The Champlain Valley is well represented on the committee, so we especially invite members from the Northeast Kingdom, Central and Southern Vermont to join. And remember, if the station you work for is a member of the VAB, so are you!

To volunteer on this committee, email vab@vab.org

"This Week at the FCC" Summary



Every week, the attorneys at [Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP](#) in Washington D.C. provide a summary of the regulatory and legal actions of significance to broadcasters within the FCC. They also provide links to information about how these actions may affect your operations. Read this week's summary as well as summaries from past weeks at:

<https://vab.org/this-week-at-the-fcc>

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