

Election Coverage 2004 Summary

With the 2004 Elections over we are now able to provide the community with some initial data on the amount and type of Election Coverage on the three Grand Rapids-based TV stations - WOOD TV 8, WZZM 13 & WXMI 17 - see page 2.

This year's data reflects what we have been documenting for six years, that when it comes to local races or races not deemed as "high profile" or "hotly contested," limited or no coverage is provided. Plenty of attention is given to the Presidential race, but that information can be found in almost any media outlet. Where local TV news plays it's most important role is in covering the local races and ballot initiatives.

When people walked into the voting booths on November 2, how much of what appeared on the ballot were they familiar with and how much of that information was provided by the local TV news? This is an important question, not just because a democracy functions better when citizens are better informed, but also because the local TV stations use the **Public Airwaves** in order to
"Serve the Public Interest."

We at the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID) are committed to holding the broadcasters accountable to serving the Public Interest on our Public Airwaves. In 2005, all non-cable TV stations in the State of Michigan will be going through a **Licensing Renewal** process. Since the TV stations don't own the Public Airwaves, they must renew their license for another 8 years in order to broadcast in the Public Interest.

GRIID will be organizing a campaign to engage more of the public in the licensing renewal process. We will be hosting community forums to present our research and asking for public input on creating community standards for our local broadcasters. In addition to Election Coverage, we will present our findings on War, Race & Gender Representation, Public Safety issues, Economic issues and Children's Educational TV programming.

We have an online Community Guide to Broadcaster Licensing Renewal
http://www.griid.org/fcc_license_renewal.shtml
and will be creating more handout materials over the next several months. We need your assistance in taking back the Public Airwaves.

To join the Local TV Licensing Renewal Campaign contact
GRIID at 616-459-4788x122 or jsmith@grcmc.org



TV News You Can Use ?

Election Coverage 2004 Summary

September 13 – November 1



- Presidential Race** →
- Plenty of coverage, mostly Horse race & Stenography
 - Limited information on voting records & platforms
 - More paid political ads during newscasts than election stories
- Congressional Races** →
- WOOD TV 8 ran stories on Districts 2 - 7
 - WXMI 17 ran stories on Districts 6 – 7
 - WZZM 13 ran a list of candidates for District 2 - 3 the day before the election
- State House Races** →
- WZZM 13 provided candidates from 7 House Districts 90 seconds of free airtime - 1 story on District 91 and 2 House District candidate forum announcements
 - No State House race coverage on WOOD TV 8 or WXMI 17
- State Board of Education
University Regents** →
- WZZM 13 ran a list of candidates on November 1
 - No coverage on WOOD TV 8 or WXMI 17
- Judicial Races** →
- WZZM 13 ran a list of candidates on November 1
 - No coverage on WOOD TV 8 or WXMI 17
- County & Municipal Races** →
- WZZM 13 ran a list of candidates on November 1
 - No coverage on WOOD TV 8 or WXMI 17
- State Ballot Proposals** →
- Proposal One: WOOD - 8 stories, WZZM - 5 stories, WXMI - 2 stories
 - Proposal Two: WOOD - 8 stories, WZZM - 5 stories, WXMI - 1 story
- Local Ballot Proposals** →
- WZZM 13 - Two stories on the Muskegon Library Millage & 1 story on the Newaygo County Medical Center Bond

The summary of findings are based upon the recording of news shows on all 3 stations Monday - Friday. We documented the 5:30, 6 & 11pm newscasts of channel 8 & 13 and the 1 hour broadcast of channel 17 at 10pm. Some news shows were pre-empted because of sports programming and may have been broadcast later. The full data findings and content analysis will be provided by GRIID by January of 2005 online at www.griid.org