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SCRIPPS

NEWSRELEASE

Scripps making free airtime available to candidates in upcoming campaigns

Television stations launching Democracy 2002 initiative

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CINCINNATI – The E.W. Scripps Company is launching Democracy 2002, a public discourse initiative that will make free airtime available to political candidates on the nine network-affiliated television stations operated by the company.

The Scripps stations will provide five minutes of free airtime to candidates nightly between 5 p.m. and 11:35 p.m. in the 30 days preceding this year's general elections. The stations also will provide free airtime as needed during the 30 days preceding primary elections. The Scripps television station group successfully implemented a similar free airtime policy during the national elections in 2000.

“Democracy 2002 was developed in support of our responsibility as journalists and broadcasters to promote public discourse and a strong democracy,” said John Lansing, senior vice president of broadcasting for Scripps. “This effort by the Scripps broadcast television station group will concentrate on bringing individual citizens and groups of citizens into an active dialogue with candidates.”

Here are the key elements of Democracy 2002:

- Scripps stations will provide a minimum of five minutes of free airtime to candidates daily between 5 p.m. and 11:35 p.m. in the 30 days preceding the general elections. The stations will also provide free airtime as needed during the 30 days preceding primary elections. The free airtime will be offered to candidates in a variety of formats including debates, extended interviews, issue statements or responses to citizens' inquiries.
- Internet sites operated by Scripps television stations will feature election-related content labeled, "Democracy 2002," that will include candidate positions on issues, voter registration information, information on the offices being sought and descriptions of political jurisdictional boundaries. Links to candidate Web sites will be included when available.
- "Get out the vote" public service announcements will be given priority clearance in each station's public service inventory during the 30-day period prior to a primary and general election.
- Scripps stations daily will concentrate editorially on exploring key local issues during the 30 days leading up to the general election. News coverage will be developed through an interactive process with local citizens and citizen groups.
- Each Scripps station will concentrate on reviewing the context and accuracy of political advertisements on television and the Internet.
- Special programming such as town meetings and debates will be presented by each of the Scripps stations during the 30 days leading up to the general election.

Making free airtime available to political candidates was one of the primary recommendations made in 2000 by the President's Advisory Committee on the Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters.

The Scripps television stations are concentrated in the top 50 U.S. markets and reach about 10 percent of the nation's television households. Participating in Democracy 2002 are the company's six ABC affiliated stations, WXYZ, Detroit; WCPO, Cincinnati; WEWS, Cleveland; WFTS, Tampa, Fla.; WMAR, Baltimore; and KNXV, Phoenix. Also participating are the company's three NBC affiliated stations, WPTV, West Palm Beach, Fla.; KSHB, Kansas City, Mo.; and KJRH, Tulsa, Okla.

The E.W. Scripps Company is a diverse media concern with interests in newspaper publishing, broadcast television, national television networks and interactive media. In addition to its network affiliated television stations, Scripps operates 21 daily newspapers and three cable television networks, with plans to launch a fourth.

Scripps national television network brands include Home & Garden Television, Food Network, DIY -- Do It Yourself Network and Fine Living, due to launch in March 2002.

The company also operates Scripps Howard News Service, United Media, the worldwide licensing and syndication home of PEANUTS and DILBERT, and 31 Web sites, including hgtv.com, foodtv.com, diy.net and comics.com.

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