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## Activist Group Challenges Chicago, Milwaukee Station Licenses

By [Doug Halonen](#)

Activist groups represented by the Media Access Project announced challenges Tuesday to the license renewals of 20 commercial TV stations in the Chicago and Milwaukee markets, alleging that the stations failed to provide adequate coverage of local and state elections last year.

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According to the groups' filings with the Federal Communications Commission, less than 1 percent of the time on newscasts on Chicago TV stations was devoted to local and state contests during four weeks before the 2004 campaigns. In Milwaukee, according to the groups, about 2 percent of the stations' newscast time during the same period was devoted to state and local elections, while another 2 percent was devoted to ballot issues.

Andrew Schwartzman, MAP president, said FCC rules do not set a specific minimum requirement for local election coverage. But according to Mr. Schwartzman's analysis, stations remain obliged to provide some.

"We're saying they're effectively doing nothing," Mr. Schwartzman said.

Frank Biancuzzo, president and general manager of ABC affiliate WISN-TV in Milwaukee -- one of the stations named in MAP's FCC filing -- said he believes the study was flawed because it didn't track the news coverage over a long enough period and failed to properly account for what WISN viewed as the important local interest in the 2004 presidential race.

"From our viewpoint, this is very misleading and misrepresents the quality political coverage that went on in this market," Mr. Biancuzzo said.

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