Your Municipal Communications Resource

Connecting Your Town to Your Residents



Newsletter

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General Meeting

Schedule 2025-26 Sept. 24 - Varto Technologies **Presentation - TBA** Oct. 29 - Zoom Meeting **Presentation - TBA** Dec. 3 - Woodbridge TV Presentation - Switchboard Jan. 28, 2026 - Zoom Meeting Reorganization Presentation - TBA Feb. 25 - Bloomfield TV Presentation - TelVue Mar. 25 - Zoom Meeting Presentation - TBA Apr. 30 - Cranford TV Presentation - DeSisti Lighting May 13-14 - Crowne Plaza, Edison Presentation – JAG Conference Jun. 24- Zoom Meeting **Presentation - TBA**

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President's Message

Bob Duthaler, President of Jersey Access Group

Stay Cool by Keeping Up With JAG

As summer settles in, many of us take a step back to enjoy some well-deserved downtime. But for PEG stations, the warmer months also offer unique opportunities to reassess, recharge, and reconnect. Summer is the perfect time to explore new ways to engage with your community and take advantage of the resources JAG provides.

Whether it's upgrading equipment, rethinking your programming strategy, or diving into training opportunities, there's no better time to focus on strengthening your station's operations and outreach. Start with the JAG website, www.jagonline.org as your resource guide. Explore past technical articles, visit the members only section for important information and outreach information, along with our on-demand educational videos.

JAG remains active all year and our summer calendar is no exception. We continue to offer educational sessions, tech updates, and industry insights through our newsletter and website. I encourage you to stay involved. Our online format makes participation easy no matter where your summer travels take you.

If you've been considering joining a committee or getting more engaged in advocacy or policy matters, this is a great time to start. Your voice and experience help shape our direction and keep PEG access strong in New Jersey. All committee meetings are held virtually to make it easier for you to participate from anywhere.

Additionally, I recommend using the summer to connect with fellow members. Networking doesn't need to pause just because the pace slows down. Reach out to another station, plan a site visit, or collaborate on content that highlights summer activities in your towns. Sharing ideas, challenges, and solutions with peers can lead to creative breakthroughs and lasting partnerships. Don't forget to explore the many opportunities our organizational members make available to you for upgrade information, onsite visits, and much more.

As always, thank you for your continued dedication to community media. The work we do together ensures transparency, education, and engagement remain core pillars in our local governments. I look forward to seeing everyone back in person again on Wednesday, September 24th, for our next general membership meeting. This will take place at Varto Technologies in East Rutherford.

Stay safe, stay connected, and let's make this a productive and inspiring summer for JAG and all our members.



The Jersey Access Group has represented the interests of municipal, educational, and community television channels for 25 years. Our efforts on behalf of our members have never been more important. JAG's Legislative Committee has kept a watchful eye on bills—both nationally and statewide—that include potential issues for JAG members, their communities, and their operations.



Olivia Trusty Confirmed by Senate as FCC Commissioner From NATOA:

On June 18, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed Olivia Trusty as a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) commissioner for the term that expired on June 30, 2025. She was also reappointed for a term of five years which started on July 1, 2025. The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) recognizes Ms. Trusty's years of dedicated public service as a staff member of the U.S. Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, the Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation and the Internet, and the Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection.

In an April 9, 2025, statement to the Senate, Commissioner Trusty promised to work with "Congress and the Administration to expand access to affordable, high-speed internet services for all Americans; protect consumers from illegal robocalls; strengthen the security of the nation's telecommunications' networks; and restore America's leadership in next-generation communications technologies."

NATOA looks forward to working with Commissioner Trusty on issues of interest to local governments. NATOA is the nonpartisan local government association supporting our members by advocating for broadband deployment, digital equity, cable services, Public, Educational and Governmental Access (PEG) Television, public safety communications and the preservation of local authority in our public rights of way (PROW.)

Delete, Delete: FCC Approves Rules to Remove and Streamline Cable Rate Regulations From the FCC:

On June 26, 2025, the FCC adopted rules that will deliver on the administration's call for agencies to unleash prosperity through deregulation, by removing from its cable rate regulations approximately 27 pages, 11,475 words, 77 rules or requirements, and 8 forms. This action is one of the first steps in the FCC's deregulation initiative, "Delete, Delete," designed to promote dynamism in American telecommunications by facilitating network modernization, infrastructure development, and performance innovation.

Many of the FCC's rules governing cable rate regulation have been rendered obsolete or unworkable due to the sunset of cable programming service tier rate regulation and the passage of time. In 2018, the Commission adopted a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to review and update its rate regulations to reduce the administrative burdens on the cable industry, franchising authorities, and the Commission. This adopted Report and Order implements these proposed changes, which will foster flexibility and innovation in this highly competitive industry. These rules will help to increase government efficiency by:

- Eliminating unnecessary forms and rules
- Reducing unnecessary burdens on cable operators by deregulating cable equipment not used exclusively to receive the basic service tier
- Empowering small businesses by exempting them from rate regulation
- Declining to extend rate regulation to commercial establishments
- Modernizing rules to account for the sunset of cable programming service tier rate regulation in determining basic service tier rates and to simplify and streamline the remaining regulations.

The Protecting Community Television Act, S-1994/HR-3805

As reported last month, Senators Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) and Representative Troy A. Carter Sr. (LA-02), member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, announced the introduction of the Protecting Community Television Act, S-1994 and HR-3805.

If passed, this legislation would undo rulemaking from the first Trump administration's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that effectively limited the resources available for public, educational, and government (PEG) channels.

Under the Communications Act, cable companies negotiate franchise agreements with local governments to provide cable services in a community. The Act caps franchise fees that a cable company pays to the local government at 5% of its revenue. This revenue helps fund PEG stations, as well as other community services (e.g. public libraries and emergency responders). In addition, cable companies historically paid up to 5% cap and provided additional, in-kind support to the community, such as free cable service to schools or access to building studios.

In 2019, the FCC issued a new rule that counted those in-kind contributions towards the 5% cap, meaning cable companies could reduce their cash payments by claiming the value of those services. With fewer cash resources, local governments were forced to choose between investing in PEG programming or supporting other public services. The result has been less funding for PEG stations.

The legislation has already been co-sponsored by Democratic Leader Schumer (D-N.Y), and Senators Cory Booker (D-N.J.) Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), Angus King (I-Me.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), and Alex Padilla (D-Calif.).

The Protecting Community Television Act has also been endorsed by the Alliance for Community Media, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, National League of Cities, MassAccess, and Maine Community Media Association.

JAG (Jersey Access Group) is an organization that advocates, promotes, and preserves the right to media production, distribution, civic engagement, and education in support of diverse community voices, through Public, Educational and Government access facilities and other forms of media.



Doing More with Less:

My Takeaways from the 2025 JAG Conference

Yervant Keshishian, Technical Director and Sales Engineer, Varto Technologies

Small stations navigate challenges with smart strategies and strong partnerships

Stepping onto the floor at this year's JAG Conference felt like coming home. After two days of connecting with station managers, volunteers, and colleagues, one theme was undeniable: every station is focused on creating high-quality content while navigating the challenges of tight budgets, limited staff, and aging equipment.





This was perfectly captured when a township media coordinator came up to our booth. He had a real-world problem, not a product question: "We know we need to upgrade, but we don't have the budget to start from scratch. How do we even begin?"

His question gets to the heart of the matter. It's not just about technology, it's about finding a practical path forward. It reaffirmed my mission here at Varto Technologies: to be a trusted local partner who provides realistic strategies, not just sells equipment.

Getting Started: Incremental Upgrades with Hybrid IP

Many attendees I spoke with were intrigued by IP-based workflows but concerned about the cost and complexity of a complete overhaul. This was a central theme in two of our packed sessions, AV Networking for PEG and Inside the Future of Live Production.

The good news is that you don't have to switch everything all at once. We demonstrated how integrating even a single piece of modern gear doesn't just add one feature, it unlocks an entirely new workflow. For example, adding a Vizrt TriCaster Vizion opens the door to powerful tools like Viz Flowics for cloud-based graphics. They all run on a stable network backbone built with gear like Netgear's AV switches. This incremental strategy allows you to modernize at your own pace and future-proof your station without disrupting daily operations.

Beyond Event Coverage: The Evolving Role of Bonded Cellular



Covering community events is a familiar challenge, but new technology is expanding the potential for even more meaningful community roles. In our live technology showcase, we demonstrated a complete workflow where a remote feed, captured with units like the LiveU LU800, is seamlessly integrated into a TriCaster Vizion switcher, enhanced with real-time graphics, and instantly distributed.

What truly resonated with attendees was the LU-Smart mobile app, which transforms modern smartphones into bonded streaming devices.

This empowers staff and even trusted volunteers to easily deliver high-quality video using the phones they already carry. It's the ultimate example of doing more with less.

Bridging Media and Public Safety

Beyond events, this technology has a critical dual use. This was the focus of another session I was honored to be a part of: Real-Time Video Updates and Information During Critical Situations. I sat on a panel alongside distinguished public safety leaders and fellow technology experts, including a fire chief, an emergency management coordinator and a police detective specializing in drone operations.



We discussed how resilient, real-time video from drones and field units is no longer limited to broadcast news. It is becoming essential for situational awareness for first responders. A key takeaway for JAG members is recognizing your station's potential role in this ecosystem.

By leveraging bonded cellular technology, you're not only equipped to cover local events but also positioned as a critical partner for local OEM and public safety agencies during emergencies. Facilitating this

collaboration between media professionals and public safety is something I'm deeply passionate about. It highlights how technology truly serves the community.

Strategic Planning: Advocating for Your Station's Future

One of the most vital discussions I had was during the Building, Expanding or Updating Facilities roundtable. Alongside fellow experts in broadcast lighting and community media leadership, we moved beyond just technology and dove into what it truly takes to secure a station's future: strategic advocacy.



We agreed that a 3-to-5-year technology roadmap is your foundational document, but its real power comes when you use it to advocate for your needs during any municipal construction or renovation project that could impact your station or its infrastructure. This means pushing for essential infrastructure like dedicated fiber runs between municipal buildings or ensuring conduits are installed before the walls go up.

More importantly, we stressed the need to advocate for your own involvement in the early design stages of any new media space, a practice that ensures it's functionally built for production from day one, not as an afterthought.

We also explored creative strategies for success, like partnering with other groups such as the Board of Education to pool resources and secure funding for shared facilities. This level of planning and advocacy is the ultimate expression of doing more with less because it secures the physical spaces and financial backing you need to thrive for years to come.

The Value of a Partner in Your Backyard

More than the technology itself, I heard repeatedly the clear need for accessible, reliable local support. When mission-critical gear fails, stations simply can't afford to wait for replacements from across the country. At Varto Technologies, we're more than just a vendor; we're an extension of your local team. Our New Jersey facility offers hands-on training, rapid-response support, and loaner equipment to ensure your operations run smoothly. Our proximity means peace of mind, knowing support is just a phone call or short drive away.

Looking Ahead

Thank you to everyone who visited our booth and joined our sessions at the JAG Conference. Your dedication continues to inspire me and my team, and we are proud to support the vital work you do. As we look ahead, another important focus is preparing your team for the future, whether that means training new volunteers, skill building for current staff, or documenting workflows so knowledge doesn't leave when someone retires. We're working with stations to make these transitions smoother and more sustainable through local training and practical onboarding support.

There is a growing expectation to stream everything reliably and without fail. That's why we're also helping JAG members build resilience into their daily operations. This includes bonded cellular redundancy, power backup systems, and remote-control workflows that keep productions running even when staff is limited. These small shifts now can prevent bigger issues later.

The future is promising, with emerging technologies like Al-driven automation and cloud production set to streamline workflows even further. As these tools become more accessible, we'll be right here to help you navigate the changes.



We're hosting the JAG meeting at our facility in September and we look forward to continuing these conversations in person. In the meantime, if you're considering your next steps or just curious about your options, we're here to offer guidance and clarity.

Reach out anytime. We'd love to support your station's unique journey forward.

Yervant Keshishian | Varto Technologies, Inc. Sales Engineer, Authorized Trainer & Technical Director Tel: 888-656-6233 | Tel: 201-662-6200 | Fax: 201-604-2661 | Yervant@vartotechnologies.com | linkedin.com/in/yervantk/ www.vartotechnologies.com

Note: JAG is grateful for the continued support of Varto Technologies. They will be hosting JAG's general meeting on September 24 at 12 noon. Lunch will be provided at 11:30am. You will also have the opportunity to tour their facility including the state-of-the-art control room pictured here.



Reflections on a Milestone:

JAG's 25th Anniversary Conference

Paul Distefano: Northeast Regional Sales Manager, DeSisti

A Milestone Year for JAG and Me

This year's Jersey Access Group Conference on May 14 and 15 wasn't just another annual gathering—it marked a major milestone: JAG's 25th anniversary. What a way to celebrate! From the Anniversary Banquet with inspiring speeches from founding members, to the energy and quality of the sessions. With all the connections made throughout the two days, clearly the JAG Conference Committee hit the mark in a big way.



As you know, as an early vendor supporter of JAG, I have been privileged to be part of this conference from its inception. I've also attended a fair share of other organizations' conferences over the years, and I can honestly say that this one stood out—not only because it celebrated JAG's quarter-century of advocating for community media, but because it showed that the organization is listening, evolving, and growing in all the right ways.

A Conference with Something for Every Attendee

One of the most noticeable improvements this year was how the conference was structured. It was clear that thoughtful changes had been implemented to balance the needs of all our attendees—members, organizational members, and associated vendors alike. There's always a tricky balancing act when you're trying to serve multiple groups under one roof, but the committee pulled it off smoothly.

For those representing municipalities and station staff, the expanded lineup of workshops was a huge win. It was evident that member feedback had been taken seriously. Attendees had more opportunities to dive deep into the nuts and bolts of technical workflows, production strategies, and legislative updates that directly impact operations. Whether you were looking for guidance on IP video transport or navigating state-level regulations, the sessions delivered valuable, actionable information. Even more importantly, they sparked some meaningful conversations outside the conference rooms—those spontaneous hallway chats that often end up being just as insightful as the sessions.



On the vendor side, the changes were equally well received. Giving vendors more time and space to demonstrate their products and engage with attendees in a less rushed environment paid off.

It wasn't just a parade of sales pitches; it felt more like a collaborative exchange. Vendors had time to explain their solutions, answer questions in depth, and even learn a thing or two from the real-world challenges JAG members face every day.

That mutual respect and understanding between product developers and users is something that sets our conference apart.

The vibe throughout both days was one of shared purpose. Everyone in the room—whether a veteran station manager or a first-time attendee—seemed to understand that we're all part of something bigger. That's the spirit JAG has fostered for 25 years, and it was alive and well at this event.

Credit is due to the entire conference committee for putting together such a strong program and engaging experience. Planning an event of this scale is not easy, especially when you're juggling so many expectations

and trying to innovate at the same time. But the results spoke for themselves: workshop rooms with engaged members, active vendor booths, and a clear sense that everyone walked away with something of value.

A Moment to Reflect on What We Achieved

Of course, the 25th anniversary gave us all a moment to reflect on just how far JAG has come. What started as a small, grassroots effort to support local access and community media in New Jersey has grown into a dynamic

organization with a real voice in the state and beyond.



The conference was a celebration of that history, but more importantly, it was a reminder that the work we all do matters. That message was felt in the sessions, the networking, and the overall tone of the event. If there's one takeaway from this year's conference, it's that JAG is not just celebrating the past, it's actively shaping the future.

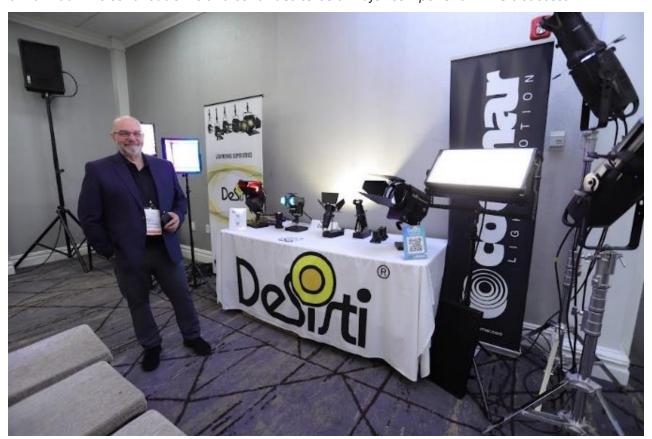
By listening to its members, collaborating with partners, and adapting to new media landscapes, JAG continues to stay relevant and impactful.

On a personal note, I would like to say that I am happy to have been a part of this from the early days and I am privileged to work with such dedicated people. I am impressed with the way JAG has evolved in the past 25 years. I am proud to have been at least a small part of its success. I know that I can speak on behalf of the other organizational members who shared the experience over this past quarter-century in stating that, along the way, we hope we have been helpful.

Oh, and Lee..... It's not DeSantis..... IT'S DE SISTI. LOL!

Here's to the next 25 years!

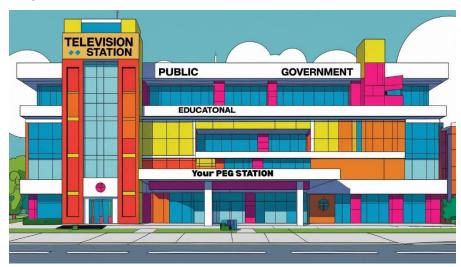
Note: Paul Distefano partnered with JAG to produce JAG's first conference. JAG is proud of the relationship that we built with Paul. His contribution is and continues to be a major component in JAG's success.



Understanding Media Licensing for PEG Stations John C. Morley—Independent Producer

Whether you're new to public, education, government (PEG) stations or have been involved for years, questions about how they work always come up. Some stations can be stricter than they need to be, while others aren't strict enough. So, finding the right balance is key. The main goal of a PEG station is to give local residents, schools, and government groups a platform to create and share content that benefits the community. It's important to know what you can and can't air on your PEG station to avoid fines or even losing your license. I'll also explain what each part of PEG—public, educational, and government—means and why it matters.

The first attempt at a public access station took root in 1968, eventually becoming known as PEG (public, education, government) television. Key figures behind this initiative included George Stoney, Red Burns (from the Alternate Media Center), and Sidney Dean (City Club of New York). Did you know the first experimental public access cable channel was WSTO-TV, which launched in Stoughton, Wisconsin, in 1970, founded by Job and Janeen Burrel? It's important to note that while



KUHT-TV launched in Houston, Texas, in 1952 as a public broadcasting station, it was distinct from the later PEG concept. The premise of public-access television was to give the general public the opportunity to film and broadcast their own content—similar to how stations like PBS operate today. PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) was designed to disseminate professional content, while public-access stations were set up to provide a platform for anyone in the community to produce and share their own programming.

To start with, let's break down what each letter in PEG means. The "P" stands for "public access," providing a system where residents and community members can produce and air their own programs. The "E" is for "educational access," giving schools, colleges, and other educational institutions a platform to share content such as board meetings, lectures, and student projects. Finally, the "G" represents "government access," where local governments broadcast town council meetings, planning boards, hearings, and other civic programming. This helps towns be transparent and build trust and support within the community.



With all the different types of content that can be broadcast, it can be confusing to know what is allowed and what is not. It's very important that your PEG station follows the licensing rules. Otherwise, it could face fines or even have its license suspended temporarily or permanently by the FCC. In some cases, stations might lose their equipment or face criminal charges for airing inappropriate adult material. Most stations understand their purpose and want to serve their community well. However, since many rely on volunteers, there can be

gray areas that, if not handled properly, could cause serious problems for the station.

Your station is free to air original content created by you, your team, or local producers. Just be sure not to use copyrighted music, images, or video unless you have a proper license—and make sure you get written proof of that license from the producer. If anyone appears on screen, always get a media release form signed.

You can also air public domain content, which anyone can use without needing a license. This includes some U.S. federal content like material from NASA, the CDC or the White House. Most media published before 1929 is generally safe to use, but always double-check it.

If you use creative commons content, be aware of the license type and what it means. For example: CCO means no restrictions, CC-BY requires you to give credit, and CC-BY-NC means you can't use it for commercial purposes. Remember, these rules only apply to the specific creative commons license you're using, so make sure you understand the exact terms to stay compliant. It might seem obvious but always verify any license directly with the publisher or licensing agency before using the content.

Stations are welcome to use royalty-free licensed media where you or the producer has paid for legal use—sources like Artlist, Storyblocks, Envato, Pexels, and others (always check the terms). Make sure you confirm whether the license allows for broadcast use, and whether streaming is included or requires an additional license.

You can't air music from CDs, Spotify, iTunes, YouTube, TikTok, movies, TV show clips, images found on Google, memes, random videos from the internet, or anything that doesn't come with a clear license or usage terms. If someone won't show you a license or provide it in writing, don't use it. Also, make sure the license isn't for "personal use only." A license that covers live performance doesn't mean it's okay for use in video or broadcast.



There's often confusion about what a CTA (call to action) is. Since PEG is non-commercial, you must follow FCC rules. You can't say things like: "Buy now," "Call to book your appointment today," or "Order now and get a discount." But you can say: "Thanks to The JMOR Connection, Inc. for supporting our program," "Visit jmor.com to learn more," or "Today's segment is brought to you by believemeachieve.com." Think acknowledgement, not advertisement, and you'll stay on the right side of the rules.

Also, don't fall for the myth that using a 5-second clip automatically qualifies as fair use—it doesn't. Fair use only applies under specific conditions like commentary, criticism, education, or parody. For example, using a 5-second clip to explain how a boat lock works may qualify, but using it just for entertainment probably won't.

I hope this article has given you some useful ways to keep your PEG station complaint, out of trouble and that you learned something from it. I would love to know what you learned. Feel free to tag back @johncmorleyserialentrepreneur with a video response and I will answer you back.

JAG General Meeting

Sept 24, 2025 @ 12:00pm, Varto Technologies (11:30am Lunch)

Presentation TBA, by Varto & Yervant Keshishian

For more information and access to the meeting email JAGinfo@jagonline.org

Don't forget to check out our YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/@jagjerseyaccessgroup
Have something you want on our YouTube channel? Send a link to dseidel@piscatawaynj.org for review.

The JAG Job Board is currently being populated with opportunities. New password needed after June 1. Contact Linda Besink | besink@gmail.com for access

Share the value of JAG's newsletter with your elected officials, cable committee, station volunteers, associates and friends. Send this invitation:

https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/B7EMU1R/JAGnewsletter

EVENT SCHEDULE 2025-26

October 29 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

December 3 at 12pm: General Meeting, Woodbridge TV, Presentation by Switchboard- Rudy Ellis, President

January 28 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

February 25 at 12pm: General Meeting, Bloomfield TV, Presentation by TelVue-Jesse Lerman, President/CEO

March 25 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

April 29 at 12pm: General Meeting, Cranford TV, Presentation by DeSisti Lighting- Paul DeStefano

May 13 & 14: JAG Conference, Crowne Plaza, Edison

June 24 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

Organizational Members



















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