

Remember Lowest Unit Charge Windows for Local Political Races and Upcoming Presidential Primaries and Caucuses

By David Oxenford

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Broadcast stations must charge political candidates the lowest unit rate that they charge any commercial advertiser for a comparable advertising spot during the 45 days before a primary and the 60 days before a general election. Broadcasters need to remember that this applies to state and local races, as well as Federal campaigns, so those charges must be given to candidates for upcoming off-year November elections that are to be held in many states in less than a month. As we've written before, while reasonable access does not apply to spots for state and local candidates, once a station decides to give these candidates access to the airwaves by selling time, most of the other political rules (lowest unit rates, equal opportunities, no censorship) apply.

With the Iowa caucus likely to take place on January 3, lowest unit rates will need to be afforded to presidential candidates by stations serving Iowa in mid-November, with stations serving New Hampshire, South Carolina, Nevada and Florida moving into a lowest unit charge window soon thereafter. The FCC has held that candidates are entitled to lowest unit rates for caucuses as if they are primary elections. And the rules apply to stations in neighboring states that have service into the states with early primaries and caucuses. So many states are currently in lowest unit rate windows for local races, and others soon will be for the Presidential race.

Look for more information about the FCC's rules in our **[Political Broadcasting Guide](#)**. I'll also be conducting a webinar summarizing the political broadcasting rules, featuring Bobby Baker, head of the FCC's political broadcasting office, on Wednesday - sponsored by the Michigan Association of Broadcasters in cooperation with the broadcast associations of at least 10 other states. Get ready for the political broadcasting season by viewing our webinar or one of the other refresher courses sponsored by other associations in the coming months.

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