**Memo: Re: MediaWires**

This memo contains a proposal to take the MediaWires program offline as of May 6, 2011, along with a proposal for promoting our members’ content via social media while we develop a strategic plan for creating a progressive media megaphone.

**MediaWires to Date**

The MediaWires are a set of four weekly blogs and headline feeds that spotlight content from TMC members pertaining to key political issues. The blogs are written by paid bloggers and managed by TMC staff. Current blogs include the Mulch, the Audit, the Pulse, and the Diaspora. (The Wavelength is funded through Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Project (MPREPP) program and appears biweekly) The MediaWires have been funded via TMC general operating funds.

The Wavelength is designed to promote and leverage media policy-related content and will continue to run as long MPREPP is funded. Funding for the “MediaWires” proper will run out as of June 31, 2011.

**Changing Trends**

In summer of 2010, the MediaWires were reprinted by 35 organizations, including blogging communities, TMC members, advocacy groups and non-profits, with an aggregate audience of approximately 7.5 million people. While tracking actual pageviews was a problem, we were able to extrapolate an estimated 1.5 million pageviews per quarter based on reporting obtained from a small sample of partner organizations.

Over the last six months, however, there has been a decreased investment in the program from external partners, and trends regarding community blogging and aggregation are on the decline. Non-profit organizations are beginning to generate their own content, which is reducing demand for the blogs and headline feeds.

* Three of our regular partners have shuttered their community blogs, and the 35 regular blog republishers have dwindled to approximately 15, the majority of whom are TMC members.
* We’ve gone from 17 installed widgets featuring TMC member headlines to 7.
* The blogs are generating approx 6,100 clickthroughs to TMC member content each month, which is down from approx 10,000/month generated last summer.

**What’s Working?**

The MediaWires are doing well on the social media front. The Media Consortium fan page on Facebook continues to grow and has over 1800 users, up from 1200 in August 2010. We have over 2900 combined followers on Twitter, up from 1677 in August 2010. We also piloted 5 short video spotlights of members' content last fall, which have accrued 1325 views.

The program is a good entry point for potential allies, partners, and new TMC members. It also has served as a solid primer for crafting content collaborations as we’ve seen with Campaign Cash, the Media Policy Reporting and Education Pilot Program, and Wisconsin.

**Recommendations:**

Because the technology and trends supporting the MediaWires program have shifted, TMC staff recommends closing the blogs as of May 6. We will continue programming focused on outreach and exposure of members content using the following recommendations:

1. Close down the ongoing MediaWires blogs as of May 6, 2011
2. Hire part-time staff to act as the social media voice for TMC at least 5 hours a week, using Facebook, Twitter, etc. Goals for this position include:
3. Draw attention to TMC member content
4. Create visibility for TMC programs
5. Build a Tumblr account to feature notable content from TMC members.
6. Begin creating a strategic plan for building a megaphone for TMC and TMC members.

**Conclusion:**

Digital change happens quickly. TMC needs to follow its own advice and move nimbly with changing technologies. Social media has largely superseded blogs as a means of aggregation and promotion. As we craft a new program, the goal of TMC staff will continue to be to build the reach and impact of TMC members’ content and encourage cross-pollination of audiences.