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**Indiana Debate Commission Announces Final Numbers for Gubernatorial Debates
In-Kind Donations Include Public Television, Venues, and Volunteers**

INDIANAPOLIS—The landscape for debates changed dramatically this year with the partnership of the Indiana Debate Commission and Indiana’s 16 public broadcasting television and radio stations, extending viewership broadly throughout the state prior to the November gubernatorial election.

“This was a great way for candidates to be sure they had every reasonable opportunity to say all they wanted to say to Hoosier voters,” said Bruce Haines, president and general manager of WFWA-TV in Fort Wayne, Ind., and president of the Indiana Public Broadcasting Stations.

The commitment from IPBS to cover the productions was considerable—totaling \$54,425 to produce each of the three debates, which included production, personnel and equipment costs. The stations that provided services were Lakeshore Public Television in Merrillville, Ind., WVUT-TV in Vincennes, Ind., and WTIU-TV in Bloomington, Ind.

The Indiana Debate Commission, a non-partisan volunteer citizen-media group in its first year of operation, met its 2008 goals—to provide free broadcast feeds of the debates statewide, increase voter participation by allowing the public to submit online questions for consideration, and to produce and sponsor three gubernatorial debates.

The first-time series of gubernatorial debates this election season featured Gov. Mitch Daniels, Democrat Jill Long Thompson and Libertarian Andy Horning from September through October at three different venues.

In the site selection process, the commission also secured and chose venues that had professional staffs and partnered with those that were also willing to donate services and support—which accounted for another estimated \$74,480 for in-kind support.

The professional staff and volunteers supporting all three debates included more than 200 people at all locations, an unprecedented cooperative effort to present professional debate formats for this year’s candidates.

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An average of 67 people per venue, including the Star Plaza Theatre, Jasper Arts Center and Indiana University Auditorium, provided logistical support.

“In the commission’s first year of operation, we could not have expected more—with everyone from the League of Women Voters working registration tables at the events to donated support in legal services and set design,” said Kevin Finch, president of the Indiana Debate Commission and news director of WISH-TV in Indianapolis.

The debate commission’s work in 2008 marked a number of firsts for organized gubernatorial debates including extended Web site broadcasts provided by Indiana Higher Education Telecommunication System and available for post-debate viewing on the commission’s Web site.

A total of 2,868 people attended the live hour-long debates around Indiana; while 2,826 visited the debates that were posted and archived online.

For the final debate, many commercial TV stations also carried the hour-long broadcast without commercial interruption—including those in the state’s largest markets. The central Indiana viewership for the Bloomington event on Oct. 14, according to Nielsen, included 144,950 households.

About the Indiana Debate Commission

The Indiana Debate Commission is a non-partisan, statewide group of 13 citizen and media organizations dedicated to promoting debates at the state level. Incorporated in the fall of 2007, the IDC will work with candidates, sponsors, venues and citizen groups to promote open, unbiased and transparent debates for Hoosier voters. For more information visit: www.indianadebatecommission.com

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