



A TV anchor jumps her ship

With help from a new state law, Dori Marlin will move to rival WRGB Ch. 6

By **CHRIS CHURCHILL**, Business writer

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WTEN Ch. 10 morning anchor Dori Marlin is jumping to a rival Capital Region television station, a move eased by a new state law that nullified noncompete agreements.

Gov. David Paterson signed the Broadcast Employees Freedom to Work Act in August, prior to which it was common for anchors, reporters and others to work under contracts that prevented them from moving to stations in the same market.

Marlin, who in December will become an evening news anchor at WRGB Ch. 6, believes her move couldn't have occurred without the law's passage.

"When that legislation came into effect, it opened the door," she said Thursday.

In her new role, Marlin will co-anchor the news at 6, 6:30 and 11 p.m. She also will be the sole host of a short newscast shown at 10 p.m. on sister station WCWN Ch. 45.

Marlin is not the first Capital Region news personality to move to a new job within the region. But in the past, such moves have brought legal fights.

In 2003, for example, John Gray, now at WXXA Ch. 23, needed a judge's ruling to begin work at the Fox affiliate in Albany, defying a noncompete clause with his former employer, WNYT Ch. 13, the NBC affiliate in Menands.

Paul Conti, a journalism professor at The College of Saint Rose in Albany, said such contracts were common, though most stations privately realized they were difficult to enforce and defend in court.

The effect of the clauses was to keep salaries down by preventing popular personalities from negotiating with rival stations, he said.

"Even if you could get a big raise across town, your employer could hold you in place," said Conti, formerly a WNYT news director.

Paterson, when announcing his signing of the bill, called noncompete clauses "an unfair burden" and predicted the law "would empower broadcasters with greater independence."

At WRGB, Marlin replaces Michelle Williams, who left the CBS affiliate in Niskayuna in June to care for her children, said station General Manager Robert Furlong. "It was her decision completely," he said.

Furlong and Lisa Jackson, news director and station manager at WRGB, said they had noticed the quality of Marlin's work at WTEN — particularly what they described as her ability to connect with viewers.

"She's skilled at getting answers to viewers' questions and communicates the news in a way that viewers understand how it impacts them," Jackson said.

Marlin, a Florida native and graduate of the University of Florida, started her broadcast career in 1999. She joined WTEN in 2005 after several years at WDHN in Dothan, Ala.

Rene Laspina, general manager at WTEN, the ABC affiliate in Albany, on Thursday said she is "thrilled" for Marlin, calling the move "a great promotion."

Indeed, anchoring the evening news, still the most watched of news broadcasts, offers Marlin greater prestige and prominence. And it provides relief from a punishing early-morning schedule.

"Sleep is something I haven't really gotten much of in the last four years," Marlin said.

Chris Churchill can be reached at 454-5442 or by e-mail at cchurchill@timesunion.com.