

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 31 (Delegate Giannetti)

Commerce and Government Matters

Maryland General Assembly - Recording of Floor Sessions and Standing Committee Proceedings

This bill requires the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) to produce an audio and video recording of floor sessions and standing committee meetings of the General Assembly. DLS is to make the recordings available to the media for broadcasting to the public. The Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) is to adopt guidelines regarding the recording, which must cover procedures governing public availability of recordings and charges for recordings or access to the recording system to offset recording costs.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$977,000 to \$2.7 million in FY 2000, which includes initial system installation costs. Future year expenditures would reflect only ongoing operating expenses of around \$500,000. General fund revenues could increase by a significant amount to recover the costs of the recording systems.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful.

Fiscal Analysis

Background: Most states already audiotape floor sessions in their chambers and hearings in committees. Two-thirds of states audiotape all floor sessions in at least 1 chamber; almost half, 23 states, audiotape floor sessions in both chambers. Thirty-eight states audiotape committee hearings in either the lower or upper house. About half of those, 18 states, audiotape all committee hearings. About 14 states audiotape all floor sessions and all committee hearings in both the upper and lower houses.

Relatively few states, about 7, have experience with videotaping floor sessions or committee hearings. Those states include: Minnesota, Ohio, Texas, Louisiana, Washington, and Oregon. Kansas, which had videotaped House floor sessions for the past 2 sessions, has recently stopped videotaping.

State Expenditures:

Audiotaping

The Senate already audiotapes floor sessions and standing committee hearings. The Digital Audio Tape (DAT) system has been in use since 1991. Each standing committee, the fourth floor and basement meeting rooms in the Senate Office Building, the Senate Chamber, the Joint Hearing Room, and the library are equipped with recording and listening capabilities under this system. Some of these locations were added after the initial purchase of equipment. The initial installation cost was \$46,000. This includes \$27,800 for 6 committee room systems (@\$4,630 each), \$4,200 for 1 Senate floor system, \$8,500 for the library system, and \$5,500 for 500 tapes. The DAT tapes cost around \$10 for a 4-hour tape. Approximately 115 tapes were used in 1998, for a cost of \$1,150. The service contract is \$400 annually.

To extend this system to the House of Delegates would require installation of an audiotaping system for the House Chamber and 8 standing committee rooms, assuming that subcommittee as well as committee meetings would be taped. Based on the Senate experience, and adjusting for inflation, the total cost for audiotaping the House would be \$50,637, assuming that the DAT system is used. This estimate reflects \$5,157 for the floor system and \$5,685 each for the 8 committee rooms. The annual service contract would be \$491. The annual cost of tapes would be \$1,440, assuming that 144 tapes would be used each year.

Therefore, fiscal 2000 general fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$52,085, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 1999 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of installing and operating an audiotaping system in the House of Delegates. Future year expenditures would reflect only ongoing operating expenses (around \$1,950 for tapes and maintenance).

Videotaping

Other States' Costs

The following information is based on information provided by states that videotape floor and/or committee meetings. Costs associated with videotaping encompass a wide range due to several factors. These include the number of committee rooms to be equipped; the size of the chambers; use of remote versus manned cameras; the number of staff; existing cabling and audio equipment; and the price of the videotaping equipment. However, most of the states surveyed have reported similar initial capitalization and operational costs.

Initial capitalization costs averaged from \$2 to \$4 million for construction, installation, and cabling for video cameras for 2 chambers, 10 to 12 committee rooms, and remote consoles for monitoring those cameras. Most states reported using 5 to 6 cameras in each chamber for floor sessions and 3 cameras in each committee room. Placement of cameras is as follows: in the committees, 1 camera is directed at the witness, a second at the chairman and committee members, and a third pans the committee room; and in the chambers, a camera is usually placed in each of 4 corners, a fifth is aimed at the presiding officer, and a sixth may be aimed, head on, at the members. Many of the states have reported purchasing cameras with panning, zooming, and focusing capabilities. The cost of these cameras ranges from \$10,000 to \$40,000 or more per camera. Additionally, since most of the states have used remotely-operated cameras, additional special equipment is needed to support the installation of the cameras.

Operational costs, including staffing, purchase of videotapes, and maintenance, range from \$500,000 to \$1.0 million annually. Most of the states surveyed use remote rather than manned cameras. That requires setting up a remote control room for monitoring. Two remote control rooms are necessary if it is likely that both houses of the legislature would sit in session simultaneously and if committees in both houses would be sitting in hearings simultaneously. Operation of the cameras is from a remote console with a camera person operating the console for each location. Staffing for 2 control rooms and for production is usually at 10 persons, including 2 technical staff, 4 producers, and interns. Reported salaries for staff included \$40,000 to \$50,000 for technical engineers and \$35,000 to \$40,000 for media producers.

Maryland's Costs

In Maryland, floor sessions in the House and Senate occur simultaneously more often than not. The same is true with committee hearings. These practices would necessitate the operation of 2 remote control rooms for monitoring the floor sessions and committee hearings. To cover floor sessions in both houses, 10 to 12 cameras would be needed; the 10 standing committees would require an additional 30 cameras. Since 2 standing committees

often hear bills jointly, the Joint Hearing Room would probably need to be equipped similarly. In addition, subcommittees of the standing committees might need to be videotaped. Since these subcommittees sometimes meet in locations other than the standing committee room, potentially 4 additional rooms may need to be equipped. Therefore, the Maryland General Assembly may need about 55 cameras. First year equipment and installation costs could range from \$550,000 to \$2.2 million. Operational costs could reach \$500,000 (including salaries and fringe benefits of at least \$350,000) annually because of the General Assembly's practice of simultaneous floor and standing committee sessions.

Therefore, fiscal 2000 general fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$925,000 to \$2.6 million, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 1999 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of installing a videotaping system in both houses of the General Assembly and 6 positions (2 technical engineers, 4 producers). It includes salaries, fringe benefits, and ongoing operating expenses. Future year expenditures would reflect only ongoing operating expenses of up to \$500,000.

Total State Expenditures

The table below provides a summary of fiscal 2000 costs for audiotaping and videotaping.

**Total State Expenditures
FY 2000**

	<u>Equipment and Installation Costs</u>	<u>Ongoing Operating Costs*</u>	<u>Total</u>
Audiotaping	\$50,637	\$1,448	\$52,085
Videotaping	\$550,000 to \$2.2 million	\$375,000	\$925,000 to \$2.6 million
Total	\$600,637 to \$2.3 million	\$376,448	\$977,000 to \$2.7 million

* assumes 3-month start-up delay

Source: Department of Legislative Services

State Revenues: General fund revenues would increase depending on the amount charged to those who want access to the recordings. It is not possible at this time to predict the amount of revenues that could be recovered because fee levels will be set by the Legislative Policy Committee.

Small Business Effect: The bill could favorably affect a limited number of small businesses that win a contract with the General Assembly to install and maintain an audiotaping and/or videotaping system.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services; States of Oregon, Minnesota, Texas, Kansas, Ohio, Tennessee

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 4, 1999

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