

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1437 (Delegate O'Donnell)  
Health and Government Operations

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**Task Force to Study the Use of Technology to Cover State Governmental Matters**

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This bill establishes a task force to study: (1) the feasibility of covering State government matter using existing and future technology; (2) funding for such an endeavor; (3) governance; (4) technology; (5) programming and content; (6) distribution; (7) fairness; and (8) duration of coverage. The Departments of Budget and Management (DBM) and Legislative Services (DLS) are charged with providing staffing for the task force. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2005.

The task force takes effect July 1, 2005 and terminates on June 30, 2006.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DBM and DLS are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Background:** The DLS Office of Information Systems administers the General Assembly's web site – <http://mlis.state.md.us>. The site offers numerous features to bring the actions and activities of the General Assembly to the public. The site includes free

access, as well as a subscription service, which offers more features. The site includes information about bills, including subject matter, text, fiscal notes, sponsor information, procedural history and prior year introductions.

The site also offers real-time audio from both chambers, so the public can listen to floor sessions. The technology to broadcast a video feed from the chambers and committee hearing rooms is being explored and tested currently. Finally, the completion of the addition on the House Office Building will provide improved infrastructure which will allow for better audio and video access to hearings and meetings.

Maryland Public Television (MPT) is the only analog television station that reaches all points in the State. MPT airs floor sessions as well as committee hearings. Comcast Cable also makes certain MPT segments available through their digital On-Demand service.

With the advent of digital television, MPT no longer is restricted to one piece of the analog spectrum. MPT envisions a 24-hour digital cable station dedicated to Maryland government activities. This would include State Legislative and Executive branch activities, as well as local government functions.

MPT has an annual budget of approximately \$100,000 to provide limited coverage of the legislative session. To the extent that the task force recommends expansion of this coverage, these expenditures will increase.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Budget and Management, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 18, 2005  
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