



NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

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Transcription of Legislative Proceedings

In October 2010, a request for information about the transcription of legislative proceedings was posted to the electronic discussion group of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. The specific questions were:

1. Do you transcribe any legislative proceedings *automatically*?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If yes to #1, which legislative proceedings are transcribed automatically?
 - a. Floor sessions
 - b. Public hearings
 - c. Committee meetings
 - d. Other (please describe)
3. If no to #1, do you transcribe any legislative proceedings *upon request*?
 - a. Yes, upon request from a legislator
 - b. Yes, upon request from a legislative staff person
 - c. Yes, upon request from any citizen
 - d. No
4. If yes to # 3, which legislative proceedings will be transcribed upon request?
 - a. Floor sessions
 - b. Public hearings
 - c. Committee meetings
 - d. Other (please describe)
5. Are your transcriptions done:
 - a. In house?
 - b. By an outside vendor?
6. If the transcriptions are done in house, what technology is used?
7. What is the turnaround time?

Provided below is a summary of the responses.

Alabama Senate. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) No. 4) NA. 5) NA. 6) NA. 7) NA.

Arkansas Senate. No to everything in Arkansas Senate.

California Assembly. The California Assembly does not publish the Journal or proceedings as an official verbatim record.

Colorado Senate. We do not transcribe. Floor sessions and committee hearings are recorded and we provide CDs to anyone upon request

Colorado House. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) We do not transcribe, but we do burn a CD of a committee hearing upon request. We provide Braille transcriptions of committee hearings upon request. We have also burned a DVD of floor proceedings upon request. There is a minimal charge for the DVD. 4) See #3. 5) Braille transcriptions are done by an outside vendor.

Florida House. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) We transcribe and spread remarks upon motion of a member and agreed to by the House. Generally the Speaker refers all motions to spread remarks upon the Journal to the Rules & Calendar Council for their review and approval. Occasionally, after the motion is made and after taking the sense of the House by a voice vote, he further instructs the Clerk to spread the remarks without first referring to the Council. We very rarely have transcribed anything other than remarks and only if directed by the Speaker. 4) Remarks. 5) In-house. 6) We use FTR Gold digital recording in the Chamber and transcribe in Microsoft Word. 7) We try to get the transcription done the same day, but depending on the length of the remarks and the lateness in the 60-day session and other priorities, we transcribe as quickly as possible.

Hawaii Senate. 1) Yes. 2) Floor sessions. 3) NA. 4) Senators have borrowed transcription equipment for hearings and meetings. 5) In-house. 6) Primary recording is done via a computer outfitted with Audacity software that is connected to our chamber sound system, which allows us to start/stop recording remotely from any laptop or PC. First and second back-up recordings are done with Phillips Conference Recording System and Digital Pocket memo, which uses SpeechExec Pro software that converts files to industry-standard compact DSS/DSS2 files encoding format. Transcription files can be put in MP3 format, which allows them to be listened to in a variety of ways (PC, laptop, MP3 player, etc.). Cost of system hardware and software was \$1,800. 7) The turn-around for most session days is 24-hours, except on third and final reading voting sessions where there is lengthy debate, we allow transcriptionist a longer turn-around time, usually completed within the week.

Idaho Senate. 1) No. 2) We record committee meetings and public hearings. It is not done automatically. The recordings are made of almost every meeting, but only if the committee secretary wishes to have a recording to serve as backup to her note taking. 3) Staff person. 4) Public hearings and committee meetings. 5) In-house. 6) We use digital recorders. Several committees use the same recorder, but each secretary has their own computer chip they insert into the recorder at the time of their meeting. 7) There is no set deadline. We ask they be done before the next meeting; but if that is not possible, within a week of the meeting. Some of our committees meet four days a week, so it's difficult to keep up with the minutes; the secretaries just complete them as soon as possible.

Idaho House. We do not automatically transcribe any legislative proceedings in the Idaho House.

Illinois Senate. 1) In Illinois, Article 4, Section 7(b) of the Constitution requires that "Each house shall keep a journal of its proceedings and a transcript of its debates. The journal shall be published and the transcript shall be available to the public." The verbatim transcripts were new starting with the constitution of 1970. 2) Floor sessions only are transcribed. 3) NA. 4) N/A. 5) In-house. 6) Floor sessions are digitally recorded and then transcribed using **FTR Gold**. 7) Typically a final transcript lags the session day by a few weeks to a few months. Upon request, we will provide an audio disc of the debate on certain bills.

Iowa House. No verbatim transcription in the Iowa House journal except for the Governor's Condition of the State Address and opening and closing session remarks by the leaders of both parties.

Louisiana House. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) a. Yes, upon the approval of the Speaker. b. No. c. No. 4) a. Yes. b. Yes. c. Yes. 5) In-house. 6) WordPerfect for document creation; FTP for the electronic stream. 7) Never promised, always as staff can fit the project in.

Mississippi House. We do not record or transcribe legislative proceedings of the Mississippi House.

Missouri Senate. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) Yes, committee chair and leadership. 4) Committee meetings – dependent on subject matter. 5) In-house. 6) Recorded and stored on compact disc. 7) Depends on subject matter and availability of staff.

Missouri House. For the Missouri House, no to all. If we have video available, we will provide it at a charge as allowable in response to a Sunshine Law request.

Nebraska Unicameral. 1) Yes. 2) Floor sessions and public hearings. 3) NA. 4) NA. 5) In-house. 6) [No response]. 7) Normally a few days or perhaps a week. Rush requests are frequent and are usually turned around within 36 hours.

Nevada Assembly. The Nevada Assembly transcribes all committee and subcommittee meetings in-house using FTR and Word. The turnaround time for minutes is typically three to four weeks. We occasionally coordinate town hall meetings but do not transcribe them.

For the journal, we automatically transcribe the governor's state of the state address, joint addresses from members of our congressional delegation, and the state of the judiciary address. If a member requests his remarks be entered in the journal, we transcribe those as well. We'll also transcribe portions of floor session if a legislator, a legislative staffer, or the Nevada Supreme Court requests a verbatim transcript of a portion of a floor meeting. We provide same day turnaround for all remarks that appear in the journal except committee of the whole, which are usually quite lengthy and appear in the final journal.

New Hampshire Senate. 1) Yes. 2) Floor sessions, committee meetings, public hearings and public informational meetings. 3) NA. 4) NA. 5) In-house. 6) Digital recorders are used to record for committee hearings, the recordings of which are then loaded onto secretaries' computers and a transcription module program is used to transcribe them. Sessions are recorded on audio tapes and transcribed using a Dictaphone. Audio is also available on the Web as streaming media. 7) The Committee Secretaries try to complete hearing transcripts as soon as possible. However, due to the heavy workload during session, much of the committee transcripts are transcribed in the summer months at the conclusion of session. Upon request, they will be given priority and completed as soon as possible. The process is much the same for the Senate Journal

New Hampshire House. No to all for the New Hampshire House. We do automatically transcribe certain speeches (Governor and Chief Justice) when they address the House on a formal occasion. Also, the House can vote to put transcriptions of certain remarks or debate in the Permanent Journal.

Ohio House. No to all for the Ohio House.

Oregon Senate. No to all. We have on occasion transcribed a specific section, although I can't remember the last time a request like that came through. With all the streaming of committee and floor sessions, it's easy to access them on the website archives.

Pennsylvania Senate. 1) Yes. 2) a. Floor sessions - verbatim for the Legislative Journal. b. Public hearings – as we can accommodate. Otherwise, outside court reporting firms are hired by the committee staff. 3) NA. 4) NA. 5) In-house. 6) Real-time court reporting software, exported to Word Perfect to create the Legislative Journal. Court reporting software for all committee hearings. 7) Typically one to two weeks for the official posted verbatim Journal; hearings are transcribed after Journals, unless requested to be expedited by leadership.

Texas Senate. 1) No. 2) NA. 3) Yes, upon request from a legislator or legislative staff person. 4) Floor sessions, public hearings and committee meetings. 5) In-house. 6) We use a Windows transcribing software program--Transcription Buddy, which plays, edits, and works with MP3 files. Senate Media uploads the meetings on a server and Senate Staff Services accesses the hearings from the server when transcription is requested. Because we still have old audio recordings on cassette tapes, when asked to transcribe those recordings we use a Dictaphone transcribing machine. 7) Depends on the length of the hearing and the urgency of the request.

Utah House. In the Utah House, we do not prepare verbatim transcriptions. On rare occasions, a House member will request a transcription of a debate or committee hearing and we prepare the transcription for him/her.

Washington State Senate. 1) b. No. Portions of the Journal are verbatim and involve Points of Personal Privilege, colloquies and parliamentary questions. As Karen points out, we also include gubernatorial and judicial addresses to (usually) joint sessions as are remarks from special and honored guests. We also have the motion to have certain remarks “spread upon the journal.”

3) Yes for all, but rarely and only if the request isn’t too involved. We avoid creating new records to respond to requests. For large requests we’d supply the recording and the member’s personal staff, legislative or other requestor would have to transcribe on their own.

4) All the sessions and hearings are recorded and could be part of a request.

5) a. In house, if time and resources allow (see #3).

6) Was FTR Gold for the recording, now AV Capture All (thank you Windows 7) and (if a transcription is created at all) MS Word.

7) Requests for public records require a response within 5 days. That response can include a new time frame but, for most all requests, we simply supply the recording – usually within a day or two – and allow the requestor to transcribe. If the requested recording has been archived, we refer the requestor there.