

LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

January 6, 1983

HOUSE BILL NO. 55

Sponsor: Representative Kitselman

Proponents: Phil Strobe (Representing Video Fax)
Bob Durkee (Submitted Witness Sheet as Proponent)
Nancy L. McCaslin (Videotaping)
Diana Dowling (Executive Director of the Legislative
Council-testifying upon request)

Opponents: Joe Lamson (Executive Secretary of the Montana
Democratic Party)

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VIDEO SYSTEM COST DATE (submitted by Sponsor)

Chairman Menahan called the meeting to order and asked the secretary to take the roll call. All members were present.

Chairman Menahan called on the proponents to testify, asking the Sponsor, Representative Kitselman, to speak first. Representative Kitselman proposed the plan for a pilot program of videotaping legislative sessions as well as important committee hearings. He said the program would require the hiring of four people, and listed other benefits, including:

1. Legislators could review tapes of important hearing they miss because of other pressing business
2. Government would be more accessible to Montanans because videotapes could be made available to them if they couldn't make the long trek to Helena for hearings.
3. Legislators would be made more accountable because they couldn't say one thing in committee and the opposite thing in floor debate.

Phil Strobe, who represents Video Fax, a firm that videotapes legislative sessions for Oregon and other states, said the system would provide a permanent record to help judges and lawyers determine the legislative intent of laws.

He also argued it would be best to approve the system now since the Capitol will soon be renovated.

State Law Librarian, Clair Engel, agreed the state needs a permanent record, saying her office gets many requests from lawyers who want to know what the legislature meant when it enacted certain laws. She said records were skimpy and that it was very difficult to get a record of intent.

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Legislative Council Director, Diana Dowling, said the videotape system could be "wonderful" because it would provide a permanent record and do so at a cheaper cost than hiring court reporters.

She further explained that the sytem could help aleviate problems with crowded hearing rooms because videotape monitors could be set up outside them for viewing by those who couldn't get into the hearing room due to lack of space.

Jo Lamson testified as an opponent to House Bill No. 55. He said it didn't make sense to spend \$75,000 on videotaping at a time when Montana suffers from economic blight and high unemployment. He said he was surprised that this bill was sponsored by the republicans.

Representative Donaldson asked who would fund the implementation of this bill, and was informed by Diana Dowling that it was entirely up to the leadership where the money would be appropriated.

Representative Jan Brown wanted to know how this committee could approve a contract of this nature without letting it out on bids.

Representative Kitselman said Videofax was the only one who came forth, and since it was only a pilot program and there was the time element to consider if they were to cover this session, he thought they would not be able to put it out on bids.

More discussion followed regarding the various states using the system, and Phil Strobe said Oregon and Alaska had full coverage and some of the other states had at least partial coverage.

Chairman Menahan thanked the people testifying and said the members would consider the bill further at their executive session which they would have soon. He said he would also talk with the leadership and gather other types of input, and suggested the videotape be set up somewhere where the representatives could view it.

Representative Donaldson said the point that Representative Jan Brown made regarding the contract being let out, was an excellent one, and that he didn't think they should circumvent other bidders.

Chairman Menahan said both universities had excellent crews who videotaped games, and that perhaps this should be considered prior to buying an expensive system.

Representative Kitselman said if the members thought they shouldn't have the system now, he would like to suggest a resolution be introduced to look into the matter during the interim.

Representative Zabrocki said he thought it was too late to do anything about purchasing the system now, and that they should certainly look into the colleges videotaping some of the hearings, if

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they thought the hearings should be taped at all. He further said he would definately vote "NO" should he not be here when the committee met again to vote on the bill.

Representative Curtiss asked if only one house would have control of the videtaping and further said she thought the taping could be very selective as to what was videtaped, depending on which party was in control. She said these things should be considered before they purchased any system.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Zorka DaSilva, Secretary

Chairman Menahan