

House Rules of Procedure, 89th Legislature

Rule 5. Floor Procedure

Sec. 20. Media Access to House Chamber. (a) When the house is in session, no media representative shall be admitted to the floor of the house or allowed its privileges unless the person is:

(1) employed by a print, broadcast, or Internet news organization, or by a wire service serving those organizations:

(A) whose principal business is the periodic dissemination of original news and opinion of interest to a broad segment of the public;

(B) which has published or operated continuously for 18 months:

(i) as a for-profit organization that is supported chiefly by advertising or subscription revenue; or

(ii) as a nonprofit organization that has qualified as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3), Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and

(C) whose publications or operations are editorially independent of any institution, foundation, or interest group that lobbies the government or that is not principally a general news organization; and

(2) not engaged in any lobbying or paid advocacy, advertising, publicity, or promotion work for any individual, political party, corporation, organization, or government agency.

(b) Any media representative seeking admission to the floor of the house under the provisions of this section must submit to the Committee on House Administration:

(1) a notarized application in a form determined by the committee; and

(2) a letter from the media representative's employer certifying that:

(A) the media representative is engaged primarily in reporting the sessions of the legislature; and

(B) no part of the media representative's salary for legislative coverage is paid from a source other than the news organization or wire service that employs the media representative.

(c) Regularly accredited media representatives who have duly qualified under the provisions of this section may, when requested to do so, make recommendations through their professional committees to the Committee on House Administration as to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the credentials of any person seeking admission to the floor of the house under this section.

(d) If the Committee on House Administration determines that a person's media credentials meet the requirements of this section, the committee shall issue a pass card to the person. The committee may impose a fee to cover the costs of issuing a pass card. This pass card must be presented to the doorkeeper each time the person seeks admission to the floor of the house while the house is in session. Pass cards issued under this section shall not be transferable. The failure of a media representative to maintain the requirements of this section may result in the revocation of the pass card. Persons admitted to the floor of the house pursuant to the provisions of this section shall work in appropriate convenient seats or work stations in the house, which shall be designated for that purpose by the Committee on House Administration.

(e) Members of the house shall not engage in interviews and press conferences on the house floor while the house is in session. The Committee on House Administration is authorized to enforce this provision and to prescribe such other regulations as may be necessary and desirable to achieve these purposes.

(f) Permission to make recordings in or from the house chamber while the house is in session may be granted only by the Committee on House Administration. The committee shall promulgate rules governing recordings. When recordings from the house chamber are permitted by the Committee on House Administration, the permission shall, if necessary, identify those persons in the technical crews to whom pass cards to the floor of the house and galleries are to be issued. Passes granted under this authority shall be subject to revocation by the Committee on House Administration. As used in this subsection, "recording" means an audio, video, or photographic recording for immediate or delayed transmission by television or radio or through the Internet.

(g) The following individuals may submit a written complaint regarding a decision by the Committee on House Administration under this section:

(1) an individual who is aggrieved by the committee's failure or refusal to grant privileges under this section; or

(2) a member of the house who believes a media representative granted privileges under this section either does not meet the requirements of this section or has abused the privileges granted under this section.

(h) The Committee on House Administration shall investigate the complaint and may, if necessary, temporarily suspend the media representative's privileges pending the investigation. The committee shall notify the aggrieved individual or subject of the complaint of the time and place of a hearing on the complaint. Following the hearing, which must be conducted as provided by committee rule, the committee shall determine whether the aggrieved individual meets the requirements of this section and, as applicable:

(1) issue a pass card if the committee determines that the individual's media credentials meet the requirements of this section; or

(2) revoke the media representative's privileges granted under this section if the committee determines that the allegations contained in the complaint are valid.

(i) The final determination by the Committee on House Administration on a complaint:

(1) must be entered in the committee minutes and, if the house is convened in a regular or special session, delivered to the journal clerk and printed in the journal; and

(2) is not subject to further review except as provided by this section.