

Office of the Speaker
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Speaker Hackney creates online audio archive of House sessions

Change allows greater access to floor proceedings

RALEIGH _ Speaker Joe Hackney has cleared the way for sessions of the North Carolina House of Representatives to be digitally recorded and published online.

The easily accessible archive of each day's floor session is available by visiting the General Assembly's website, <http://www.ncleg.net>. The site has been visited about 1,400 times since the first day of the legislative session on Jan. 28, according to the General Assembly's Information Systems Division.

"I want the people of North Carolina to understand what happens in the House of Representatives. That's essential to good government," Speaker Hackney said. "Recording our sessions and making that audio available to anyone at anytime allows everyone a chance to follow our votes and debates. It's truly an easy, cost-effective way to provide access."

Previously, the House broadcast live streaming audio of its sessions online, but didn't record or archive them. The change in procedure won't cost any additional money, Information Systems Division officials said. The General Assembly has sufficient storage space for the archive and didn't have to purchase any additional software.

Groups that advocate for more open government praised the change.

"The work of the NC House of Representatives is now truly the people's business," said Jane Pinsky, director of the NC Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform. "Previous sessions of the House are now as close as the click of a computer key. Teachers will be able to use past sessions to teach their students about how our government really works and citizens will be able to know what their representatives are doing for them."

"We are very pleased with the Speaker's decision to archive the audio recordings of House sessions," said Damon Circosta, executive director of the NC Center for Voter Education. "This allows anyone across the state to listen in on the people's business at anytime. Once again the House is leading the way by helping foster a more informed citizenry."

"This is another important step in providing the citizens of our state greater transparency of the people's business," said Bob Phillips, executive director of Common Cause NC. "It's the kind of access the public wants and expects in today's high-tech information age. It will help strengthen our democracy."

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