

SENATE No. 444

To accompany the petition of Richard H. Lee for legislation to permit the public to witness the deliberations of the General Court by radio or television broadcasts and to protect radio and television stations making such broadcasts. Rules, Acting Concurrently.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty-Three.

AN ACT TO PERMIT THE PUBLIC TO WITNESS THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE GENERAL COURT BY RADIO OR TELEVISION BROADCASTS AND TO PROTECT RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS MAKING SUCH BROADCASTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Licensed radio and TV stations operating in the
2 commonwealth shall be authorized to broadcast the
3 deliberations, or portions thereof, direct or by tran-
4 scription, of either or both chambers of the general
5 court, subject to the following rules and conditions: —
6 1. The joint committee on rules shall make reason-
7 able regulations to permit any broadcasting company
8 to record or broadcast the deliberations of either
9 chamber, and shall provide for the installation of wires
10 and cameras, if desired, in such manner as will least
11 interfere with the work of each chamber, or the ap-
12 pearance of the room.

13 The committee is authorized to permit such broad-
14 casting companies to receive and broadcast proceed-
15 ings without charge to them, or to make a reasonable
16 charge for the use of space or equipment, but no com-
17 pany, station or network shall have exclusive rights
18 to such broadcasts.

19 2. No corporation or person shall be liable in dam-
20 ages to any person for libel or slander on account of
21 the broadcasting in full of any debate or discussion
22 which takes place on the floor of either branch of the
23 general court upon matters in the orders of the day
24 for that branch, nor for any transcription or re-broad-
25 cast within thirty days thereafter of excerpts of such
26 debate; provided, however, that if the debate is not
27 broadcast in full, fair and reasonable excerpts, sum-
28 maries or quotations of the principal arguments on
29 each side shall be given, and the views of the principal
30 debaters shall not be arbitrarily suppressed or mis-
31 represented by fragmentary quotations out of context.

32 3. No member of the general court actually speak-
33 ing in accordance with the rules of his chamber on
34 a matter in the orders of the day shall be liable in
35 damages or otherwise for any statement made upon
36 the floor of the chamber, or any broadcast, tran-
37 scription or re-broadcast thereof.

38 4. Any commentary or explanation of procedural
39 matters, customs or rules of the branches by an an-
40 nouncer or commentator shall likewise be privileged
41 if made fairly and without malice.