

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Pilot Project Update

July 30, 2008

Overview

Conducted in the last weeks of the First Special Session of the 123rd Legislature the Paperless Chamber pilot project gave 10 members of the House the opportunity to develop the design of and evaluate the functions of a Chamber Automation System that will improve the efficiency of the House and reduce the net cost of House operations.

The pilot project provided valuable feedback about the full implementation of a Chamber Automation System.

Participants

Representative Seth Berry
Representative Patsy Crockett
Representative Stacy Fitts
Representative Bonnie Gould
Representative Henry Joy
Representative Bruce MacDonald
Representative Lisa Miller
Representative Kim Silsby
Representative Michael Thibodeau
Representative Robert Walker

Feedback from participants

Representative Joy

- Gaining confidence
- Still have a lot to learn, but can readily see the benefits of using a paperless process
- Think paperless will be a great asset. No fumbling through books.
- "I think it's going to work out very well." (KJ 04/07/2008)
- Doesn't reduce membership in the "On and On" Club

Representative Miller

- "I think this will save a ton of money" (KJ 04/07/2008)

Representative Fitts

- Overall- this has a lot of potential
- Thanks for working with me on this project. I think it has the potential to make the House more efficient
- "This has a lot of potential to put information at your fingertips that's in a pile right now." (KJ 04/07/2008)

Representative Silsby

- “We really need to catch up on the technology” (KJ 04/07/2008)

Representative Gould

- Over all the program is working well

Survey Results

A survey of House members revealed that given the option, members would prefer to use a state provided laptop to review Calendar, Bills, Amendments and other documents with no paper copies. (84 respondents chose this option, 12 preferred to have paper copies but use their own laptops and 5 responded that they preferred to have a state provided laptop and paper copies on their desks).

Additional features requested

- Already planned (in some fashion) as part of full project
 - Need way to "annotate" the calendar and supplements with personal notes
 - Would like a link to the Maine Legislature's web site built in to one of the margins.
 - Would like a link to the Senate Calendar
 - Need to have a printer available.
 - Need a way to record votes and save paper recording. *[note: RC tab or Notes function]*
 - Calendar Staff would like ability to insert standard scripts for things like presenting a Joint Order or objecting to a Sentiment. *[note: this may not be the unimplemented Script function, but seems as if it could be incorporated]*
- Paper Number and LD Number would be easier to read if they were Right Justified instead of indented from the left.
- The Calendar and Supplements (with active links) should be available at all times
 - Caucus, Chairs' Meeting. In Committee
- Would like Calendar to stay open when no motion is displayed on the voting board.
- Heading on the top of each new window to identify it (amendment #, roll call #, etc.)
- A search feature to find items by key word would be useful.
- Would like a way to show that a roll call has been requested.
- Need a way to see list of all new amendments as they are released.
- Would like to have Paperless Chamber available on personal laptop.
- Laptops should come with option of a mouse.
- Would like a timer to record length of speeches.

Work is under way to allow members to purchase laptops through the Legislature at cost or to use their own personal laptops

Work is ongoing to fully develop and implement the application software package as well as prepare for the necessary support infrastructure

Efficiencies and Savings

The West Virginia House of Representatives, with 100 members, implemented a comprehensive laptop computerized system in 2001 that created sufficient savings in 2 years from savings in printing costs alone to completely pay for the computerized system. On-going savings have been substantial.

According to NCSL, as of July 2, 2007, 41 states had implemented "computerized" or "automated" legislative chambers, either one chamber or both, using laptops or personal computers. The "automated" chambers have produced significant savings and efficiencies.

Savings occur as follows:

- **Paper reduction costs.** In the West Virginia House, there are no paper bills or amendments on members' desks. All joint standing committee documents are electronically transferred to the House Chamber. House members adapted quickly to the new system..
 - In Maine, paper reduction alone in the House could reduce costs by \$50,000 a year.
- **Printing Costs.** In West Virginia, the reduction in printing costs alone paid for the entire investment in 2 years.
 - In Maine, printing costs for bills, amendments, House Records, and other legislative documents are part of a General Administrative account that is **not** charged to each House. The cost of printing these documents in FY 2007 amounted to \$513,121.79. In FY 2008, printing these documents amounted to \$310,463.60.
 - Printing House Members' newsletters in FY 2008 cost \$190,869.59
- **Reduced postage costs.** The West Virginia House has incurred substantial postage savings as a result of members' communications with constituents via email. E-mail is the primary and major means of communications with constituents, and email has significantly reduced paper costs.

- In Maine, postage costs for House members' mailings cost \$256,180.70.
- **Time Reductions and efficiencies.** Document transfers between chambers, preparation and distribution of amendments, orders, and other legislative documents have significantly reduced the length of time for Legislatures to conduct business while in session.
 - In Maine, a shortened Regular Session would result in savings of \$13,300 per day. If a Special Session is avoided as a result of time savings, \$40,000 to \$50,000 a day would be saved.
- **Personnel costs.** With an "automated" chamber, the need for pages and other personnel to distribute bills and perform other functions involving paper would be reduced. In Maine, a reduction of two House employees would generate \$30,000 a year in savings.

If savings of 10% could be achieved in the expenses shown above, total annual savings would \$100,000 per year. This is a very conservative estimate.