



SUITE 155  
400 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001  
202 / 737-3220

COMMENTS FROM VIEWERS DURING C-SPAN'S CALL-IN PROGRAM

TOPIC: Senate TV Coverage

DATE: August 29, 1985

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RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA:

"We feel that if we are paying a tremendous amount in taxes for our public officials, we should have the privilege of seeing our people there....In terms of the time allotted for the presentation of bills, we would have to find a compromise on that; I would have to say, around four hours."

WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK:

"Political action is one of the most important steps that the voting constituency can participate in. I'm very much in favor of the U.S. Senate proceedings being covered by television....It's an educational process. We must not allow the electorate to remain ignorant of what's going on in the state as well as the federal legislature."

FAIRFIELD, CALIFORNIA:

"I think the Senate should be covered. The thing about it is that so much of it is done in so called secret, and shouldn't be. And I think it should be gavel-to-gavel, then we could see exactly what goes on. I think when they use an excuse that a lot of work is done in committees, it's an excuse for not doing it. I think they oughta all be out on the floor doing their work rather than committees."

CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND:

"I have to come down in support of Bill Armstrong's proposal. It has been said that a senator might think he could be embarrassed by getting called to (down to) the Senate floor. But if his constituents thought that that's where he belonged, I think that's the way it should be....It's not a problem with the cameras, it's a problem with the Senate rules. And they could address that by maybe putting a time limit on debate like the House has. So instead of pointing a finger at the cameras, they maybe should be pointing a finger at themselves."

NORWALK, CALIFORNIA:

"I think that I would like to see television coverage of the Senate, and I also think that I would like to see it when it is not under the control of senators themselves but of an independent agency....I would like to see somebody besides the Speaker of the House, somebody who maybe is a representative of both parties."

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Viewers' Comments --  
on Senate TV

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA:

"I'm in favor of seeing TV allowed in the Senate, but I think that to televise a large amount of the proceedings would be useless. I have had the opportunity to attend a lot of the proceedings in the House and Senate, and a lot of it is very bland, commonplace and innocuous. The more important things that are going on in the committees would not be seen anyway....Highlights of the Senate, if cameras were let in, could be chosen either by the political majority or by the reporters....I think time would be saved and the cost could be basically held by the networks or by a cable television company."

SEASIDE, CALIFORNIA:

"I think that the Senate should be able to allow broadcasting in the chambers... (however,) I think the debate should be limited except for certain issues like, maybe, the MX missile or Nicaragua, the budget, or other important issues."

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA:

"I would say it's a very good idea for the public to understand how the Senate is working. However...the American public should understand the security problem of the nation...so (only) certain segments should be covered, instead of the whole proceedings...I'm from South Vietnam. (And) I would say it (the House) is too open because of some crucial problems openly disclosed by the House, so the whole world understood before we decided what to do with our enemies."

FLORENCE, OREGON:

"I think they (Congress) are supposed to to be doing the job for us and any input (resulting) from that kind of exposure (television), would give them a clue as to what they had better straighten up and do right...I get a form letter telling me — every three months — what they have been doing, voting for, and promoting or unpromoting, whatever the case may be...Everyone on every station tells me to write my Congressman and Senator. I'm 60 and that's old and I can't afford 22¢. I would like to have the Senate (televised). I've asked (Sen.) Ed Hatfield about it. It (his response) was a form letter. He said 'no'."

LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS:

"I am a taxpayer and most definitely I would like to see the Senate proceedings on the air...I think all (of the proceedings)."

PORTLAND, TEXAS:

"I'm all for it (Senate TV)...anything that would open up the process would be wonderful...I think the most important parts, the most important topics of the day (should be televised). It does get a bit overdrawn and boring when every little thing is shown."

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Viewers' Comments --  
on Senate TV

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS:

"It's high time that we have gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Senate, just like we do of the House of Representatives. I would try to (watch both of them) based on what is being discussed. I did visit the Senate chambers and I did not see many people there...I think that they ought to show up when the gavel hits."

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA:

"I think it would be real interesting to televise (the Senate)...10 years ago in my government class in college, according to the professor, most of the real (Senate) action took place in money passing hands in the lavatory. So, perhaps that would be the ideal location to locate the cameras...I think that the teacher - due to his experience - that told me that was telling the truth...I don't think I would say that the bulk of it (Senate work) is done there; however, I think it's — at least from my stand point — the way I see things run in this country...I think the Senate or the Congress floor is just a technicality..."

WATERTOWN, NEW YORK:

"In the long run it discourages the direct act of participation which each of us is supposed to be taking in the government, besides lending itself to the possibility of manipulating and grandstanding. People have to do a lot more to study their government than just watch television."

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA:

"I think it's absolutely imperative that we televise the Senate and House, as well as all local governments, so that we know precisely what's going on up there."

STEVENS POINT, WISCONSIN:

"It's fine to televise, but I do think you should remember that some people get very adept at manipulating the cameras, so that their opinions are made for for people, and they're not yet sophisticated enough to be aware of what's happening to them."

DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA:

"I believe that if you can sit in the Senate and watch the proceedings, you should be able to see it on the air. I love the floor of the House through your channel...I think it's going to be fantastic!"

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Viewers' Comments --  
on Senate TV

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA:

"It's outrageous that the American people have been kept waiting to view their senators in action...Anything that promotes the debate and vigilance on the part of the people is good. What I think is the danger is the suggestion that the leaders of the Senate should decide on editing and what the people of America shall see."

TOPEKA, KANSAS

"It will show the citizens how our senators really are...Maybe we will not want them in (office)."

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(letter to C-SPAN)

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA:

"Many issues that the American people are polled on are based on sparse or filtered information. Because we are heard by our Senators through polls, they should be based on more solid information....I understand that this will add a few more millions to the costs of bringing us coverage of Congress. Millions are allotted to Congressional members for office expenses each year. A small portion of their budgets could be used for this purpose. They wouldn't have to mail as many pieces of paper....I do not have any real concerns about those vain political leaders who would grandstand....He or she would not gain anything because we would see through the performance....We take a lot of chances with our form of government in any case."

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SANTA MONICA, CA :  
(letter to C-SPAN)

August 30, 1985

C-SPAN  
400 No. Capitol St., N.W., #155  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear C-SPAN Staff:

Early Saturday morning I watched a live call-in show concerning viewing the Senate proceedings. Since it was not a live program at 4:00 am, I want to tell you here my thoughts on the subject.

First, if 62 Senators are in favor without reservation of having their constituents view the activities in the Senate chambers, then so am I. Some matters of National Security are discussed in committee anyway and need not be covered in their entirety. And, because the floor debate is open to the public anyway, the Russians already know what is said there.

Many issues that the American people are polled on are based on sparse or filtered information. Because we are heard by our Senators through polls, they should be based on more solid information. Not that this will be a tool especially for our Senators to use, but one that we will have to see who's doing what or who's influencing whom. I know that our leaders will, from time to time, rely on lobbyists to argue the point at hand. We could see who is presenting information to our Senators and hear what is said for ourselves. We cannot all be in Washington. I do trust the California Senators much farther than they can be thrown...I hope it sounds like it! So, a better information base would be a major benefit.

I understand that this will add a few more millions to the costs of bringing us coverage of Congress. Millions are allotted to Congressional members for office expenses each year. A small portion of their budgets could be used for this purpose. They wouldn't have to mail as many pieces of paper.

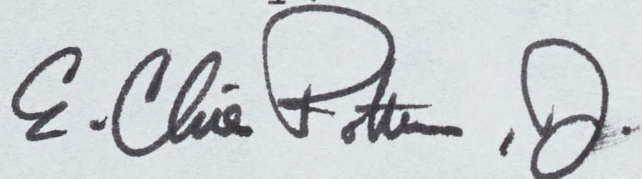
I do not have any real concerns about those vain political leaders who would grandstand. A Congressman would want to have exposure of course. However on a national basis, he or she would not gain anything because we would see through the performance, I think. We take a lot of chances with our form of government in any case.

Both bodies act on matters of national importance. I would prefer to see those issues covered first if a decision had to be made as to which coverage were to be given precedence. If there is too much information to cover, add another channel, advertise the menu of events on both channels, then the viewer could decide.

Selected committee meetings would most likely yield the most information. (I loved the House Committee hearings on the matter concerning Beverly Hills Savings and Loan.)

Thank you for the great job you do! Godspeed!

Sincerely,



E. Clive Potter, Jr.  
1111 Eleventh St., #5  
Santa Monica, CA 90403

CC: Senator Cranston  
Senator Wilson