

CHAPTER 4

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THE MEDIA

On each side of the rostrum at the front of the House and Senate chamber are boxes reserved for the press. On good days and bad, they cover the General Assembly. What they report largely determines how the public will perceive the General Assembly's work.

The Press Corps

The press corps operates through the Illinois Legislative Correspondents' Association (ILCA). The Association consists of reporters from radio and TV stations, newspapers, magazines, and wire services who cover the General Assembly and state government generally. They work from assigned spaces in the press room on the State House mezzanine. Names and pictures of reporters assigned to Springfield are in the *Illinois Blue Book*.¹

Besides covering floor sessions, reporters may attend committee hearings, commission meetings, press conferences, and other newsworthy events. Some members of the press corps are full-time residents of Springfield; others come to town when the General Assembly is in session; still others visit only occasionally. During sessions, interns in the University of Illinois at Springfield's Public Affairs Reporting Program join the career reporters.

Floor Coverage

The rules of each house prohibit access to the floor itself by members of the press during sessions. The areas reserved for use of the press are the boxes along the floor and the sections of the gallery set aside for cameras and sound equipment.² Televising sessions, making recordings, or taking photographs in the Senate is by tradition done only with permission from the President, which is usually granted unless there is an objection.

The Press Room

The press room, in the State House mezzanine, is managed by a press secretary, who besides supervising its physical facilities also distributes press releases, posts notices of interest to members of the press, and schedules use of its facilities for press conferences. The area reserved for press conferences has a platform for speakers, seating for reporters, and facilities for electronic recording. Most meetings between reporters and legislators are less formal than actual press conferences, and are arranged by mutual convenience.

Legislative Press Offices

Each leadership staff has a press office. These press officers help legislators prepare press releases and other matters relating to the media, and constituent newsletters.

Illinois Information
Service

The Illinois Information Service (IIS) within the Department of Central Management Services has radio and television recording facilities available to legislators to prepare reports or programs for distribution to broadcasting stations of their choice. The agency operates a satellite system capable of audio or video transmission; users may send live or taped programs to radio and television stations around the state. A number of legislators send weekly reports to radio stations in their districts for broadcast. Video recordings are typically broadcast only if requested by a station, or if sent in the form of "TV beepers." (In those, station reporters quiz a legislator by telephone in the IIS studio, and a video recording is made of the legislator answering them for later broadcast.) Users must pay for all tapes or DVDs and postage. IIS can supply mailing lists. Arrangements for using the IIS facilities are usually handled through the Senate and House leadership press staffs.

- Notes
1. See *Illinois Blue Book* 2007-2008, pp. 141-143.
 2. See House Rule 30(a) and Senate Rule 4-3(a), 95th General Assembly.

