



## Council of the **DISTRICT of COLUMBIA**

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### **Council Rolls Out New Technology in its Chamber, Intending to Improve Public and Member Experience**



*New Technology found in Council Chamber*

The Council has unveiled new technology in its Chamber which, over the coming months, has the potential to dramatically improve how members of the public, as well as councilmembers, experience Council meetings and hearings.

Use of the technology promises to enhance public access to the Council for those who find it difficult or impossible to attend hearings, and will generate environmental benefits as well.

Installed over the summer is an audio/video system which will allow witnesses to testify before the Council via Skype or telephone. At least initially, each committee will determine who will be allowed to avail themselves of this technology.

An essential component of the system is a set of touchscreen monitors located at each councilmember's seat at the Council dais. These monitors, designed to operate like tablets, will allow councilmembers to see and be seen by those testifying by Skype; simultaneously review the same document, graphic, or any digital file; access the internet; monitor live video feeds of all other Council hearing rooms; and communicate with each other. Over the coming months, and at each committee's discretion, the technology could eventually allow the Council to dispense with the age-old tradition of requiring witnesses to provide multiple copies of their prepared testimony.

The full functionality of the new technology, high definition cameras, will roll-out in tandem with high definition broadcasting by the Office of Cable Television.

The new technology has been installed exclusively in the Council Chamber, and, as described above, will have its full functionality rolled out incrementally across the coming months. Based on the success of this rollout, and pending further investment, the technology may gradually be placed in additional Council hearing rooms.