AN ACT Relating to prerecorded video testimony and written testimony on pending legislation; amending RCW 40.14.100; adding a new section to chapter 44.68 RCW; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The Washington state legislature functions in an open and public atmosphere. Committee meetings and floor sessions are open to the public. One of the most important opportunities to become involved in the debate over a bill is when it is the subject of a hearing before a legislative committee. The purpose of committee hearings is to gather information so that the committee can make an informed recommendation on a given bill or resolution. However, providing testimony during a committee hearing may sometimes be challenging for the public. Traveling to Olympia to testify in bad weather and during the work day may prove difficult for some members of the public. Additionally, it may be a hardship for the elderly or persons with disabilities to travel to Olympia to testify in person. It is the intent of the legislature to establish processes to allow the public to provide testimony on pending legislation through prerecorded videos and written statements in an effort to provide additional access to the legislative process and opportunities for the public to provide testimony on legislation.
Moreover, it is the intent of the legislature that whenever possible the prerecorded videos and written statements will be made available to members of the legislature prior to legislative action on legislation.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 44.68 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature and legislative agencies through the joint legislative systems committee shall develop processes to allow the public to provide testimony on pending legislation through prerecorded videos and written statements. The systems committee may set up parameters around the length of prerecorded videos and written statements that may be submitted to the legislature through these processes. Submitted testimony on pending legislation through prerecorded videos and written statements must be made available to members of the legislature in a timely fashion. The systems committee may contract with a nonprofit organization that produces gavel-to-gavel television coverage of state government deliberations and other events of statewide significance in order to develop these processes.

Sec. 3. RCW 40.14.100 and 1971 ex.s. c 102 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

As used in RCW 40.14.010 and 40.14.100 through 40.14.180, unless the context requires otherwise, "legislative records" shall be defined as correspondence, prerecorded video testimony, written testimony, amendments, reports, and minutes of meetings made by or submitted to legislative committees or subcommittees and transcripts or other records of hearings or supplementary written testimony or data thereof filed with committees or subcommittees in connection with the exercise of legislative or investigatory functions, but does not include the records of an official act of the legislature kept by the secretary of state, bills and their copies, published materials, digests, or multi-copied matter which are routinely retained and otherwise available at the state library or in a public repository, or reports or correspondence made or received by or in any way under the personal control of the individual members of the legislature.
NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. This act may be known and cited as the "accessible legislative testimony act."

--- END ---