

## **Signature Drive for a Public Petition for the Government to Provide Full and Live Telecast of Parliament**

### **Preamble**

We are calling for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents of Singapore to sign the attached Parliament Petition to urge our government to telecast live and in full all proceedings in Parliament. This letter provides the reasons why such a telecast via television and over the internet is important. It also includes instructions on how to sign the petition according to the rules laid down by Parliament.

### **Why is Parliament Important to Singaporeans?**

Democracy is not a clear-cut end goal that can be taken for granted. This Parliamentary system of creating the laws for government started when Singapore was crown colony, was later used to create our own representatives in 1958, and by 1965 helped us protect our multiracial society. It is an ongoing process that requires the engagement and participation of every citizen so they may choose the Members of Parliament who speak best for them.

Therefore Parliament represents our right, young heritage, and ability to govern ourselves as a sovereign state. Parliamentary proceedings are of national importance as major issues are discussed and debated, and bills passed into law. It is also the venue in which our elected officials carry out their duties as MPs to tell the governing ministries of Singapore what they think the needs and aspirations of their people are.

### **The Issue Today**

Unfortunately, laws have recently been changed without our knowledge or approval. Currently, video telecasts of parliamentary proceedings are cut, delayed, and easily taken down under the copyright of MediaCorp Pte Ltd. We seemed to have gone backwards from 25 years ago, when the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) carried the Budget Debate and opening of Parliament live on television. The idea of a live feed of parliamentary proceedings is actually not new to Singapore at all.

We, the electorate, should have the right to decide who we think are the best MPs for our interests and needs and our children's future. Viewing our MPs in parliament would support that. But on 7 November 2017, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Chee Hong Tat said in Parliament that Singapore's national broadcaster, MediaCorp, does not need to provide a live feed of Parliament because viewership is low.

This is wrong, because a live feed of parliamentary proceedings is not about how many people get to see it live. Few people have the means to do so on working days, and with the recordings they may do so in full later. Nor is it about how many people want to watch the whole proceedings. Imagine if we shut down schools just because children didn't like to go for Math class, or a train station because there are less passengers from the area!

The live feed and free archives are important because it allows us to share, repost, and discuss what is being done and what used to be done. It would help us develop better leaders amongst the young, passionate to serve the people in Parliament, or to help our current leaders get better with more feedback. It is not a big ask for Parliament to go live and online for a country that needs to be a "Smart Nation".

### **Why This Public Petition Matters, and What it Entails**

You might already have seen an online [petition](#) urging the government to consider providing a live feed of parliamentary proceedings on YouTube.

“[T]he current CNA microsite for parliament video archive is simply not good enough. Videos fail to load or load too slowly for anyone to even watch. Speeches are cut off and we can't see the entire context at all.”

We would like to collate physical signatures for a Public Petition of the same cause. If you have signed the online petition, we will still need a physical parliamentary petition which we can formally submit, to ask our elected representatives to address the issue. We know this method works, as last month on 23rd October, the petition to relocate Sungei Road Thieves' Market worked with only of 792 signatures, and the matter had to be addressed by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

We therefore hope to submit the Parliamentary Petition on pages 1 and 2 to express the wishes of the public to return the live broadcasts and install a searchable archive of all Parliament sessions. If this petition represents your views as well, please sign in the table of boxes provided (page 3) according to the instructions given on the next page (iii). If you would like to help gather more signatures, please feel free to mail, share or hand around the letter of pages i, ii, the instructions on iii, the petition (pages 1, 2), and the table for signatures and details (page 3).

We understand that the language and jargon used in the petition may be archaic, but it is in accordance to the Standing Orders laws for the Parliament of Singapore, written in 1961. The petition on Page 3 cannot be tampered with for the signatures to count, but you may translate or adjust pages i and ii to help your community understand why this petition is important.

Thank you for doing your part for Singapore!

## Instructions for collecting signatures for the petition

1. This is a parliamentary petition. It has to be submitted in hard copy with no photocopies/fax copies/scanned copies of signatures.
2. The petition consists of the details of the petition on the following 3 pages: page 1 is the context of the petition, page 2 the request itself, and the table for signatures on page 3.
3. Only Singaporeans / PRs aged 18 and above can sign the petition.
4. Please write and sign in ink, no pencil allowed.
5. If you made a mistake, please do not use liquid paper. Just cancel neatly and initial above the cancellation.
6. Please send us page 3 (table) on a single sheet (no front/back printing).
7. Page 3 cannot be amended or tampered with for the signatures to count.
8. Names must be written in full, according to your identity card.
9. Home address (not email address) must be written in full. This is to verify that you exist and reside in Singapore.
10. Please complete a full page of 10 signatures. We cannot submit less than a full page.

### In case you are wondering.....

1. Do you need to put down your NRIC number? Nope! According to Standing Orders 18 for public petitions, only the names and addresses of the signee are needed.
2. Why is the word 'Pray' use? Don't worry the word is not used in the religious sense but in old English: to preface a polite request.

Rules regarding a public petition may be found pages 13-15 in the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Singapore here:

<https://www.parliament.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/standing-orders-of-the-parliament-of-singapore.pdf>

### NOTE

**Dateline – Please send the fully signed pages to us by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017**

**Return to us by**

1. **Mailing it back to:  
The Online Citizen  
20 Maxwell Road #09-17, Maxwell House, Singapore 069113**
2. **Physical signing is arranged/shall be arranged. Please look out for futher updates online!**

## PETITION

**To the Honourable Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Singapore, in meeting assembled.**

The humble Petition of \_\_\_\_\_ and others of like opinion

### **SHOWETH AS FOLLOWS:**

**Petition for Complete and Verbatim Broadcasts and Recordings of Debates and Proceedings of the Parliament of Singapore to be Made Available to Members of the Public**

### **WHEREAS**

- A. all members of the public, as members of a representative democracy, should have the means to understand and discuss public affairs fully, and be able to hold their elected representatives in Parliament accountable;
- B. members of the public who are Singapore citizens are guaranteed the right to freely receive information by Article 14(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1985 Rev Ed, 1999 Rep), and this right enables them to exercise their constitutional right to vote during parliamentary and presidential elections in an informed and responsible manner;
- C. in a representative democracy, the media have a vital responsibility to keep members of the public apprised about parliamentary debates and proceedings;
- D. although transcripts of parliamentary debates and proceedings are published, these are edited and do not always record the entirety of what is said or done during parliamentary sittings;
- E. while excerpts of parliamentary debates and proceedings are also broadcast by Mediacorp Pte Ltd on radio and television as part of news programmes, due to limited time and for other reasons such broadcasts also do not convey the entirety of what is said or done during parliamentary sittings, and cannot be easily accessed after broadcast; and
- F. the Government and the Parliament should be committed to providing members of the public with free and convenient access to verbatim recordings of parliamentary sittings to enable the public to gain a complete and unbiased perspective of what transpires in Parliament;

**NOW WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, PRAY** that the Honourable Members of Parliament take steps to:

1. have sittings of the Parliament broadcast live and free of charge in a complete and verbatim form on radio or television, and through the Internet and/or other media providing similar convenience of access;
2. make a complete and verbatim archive of video recordings (or, if unavailable, audio recordings) of past and present sittings of the Parliament available for all members of the public to access free of charge through the Internet and/or other media providing similar convenience of access; and
3. have the Government's copyright in recordings and transcripts of parliamentary debates and proceedings waived to facilitate media reporting, and sharing and discussion by members of the public, of what is said and done during parliamentary sittings.

Dated this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2018

