

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli. I'm an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's podcast is regarding news coverage of government agencies. Yeah. Can you believe it's actually covered in the California statute? In the California Government Code Title 7, Chapter 1.5 actually deals with news coverage of governmental agencies. And this Chapter 1.5 was actually added to California law in 1965. And it's basically two code sections, Government Code Sections 6090 and 6091. So 6090 contains a statement of legislative findings and intent, that it's the public policy in the state, that public administrative agencies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business and that the proceedings of public administrative agencies should be conducted openly in an orderly manner so that the public may remain informed.

And then Section 6090 of the Government Code goes on to specify that in enacting this Chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the orderly use of broadcasting, telecasting, and photographic equipment and proceedings of public administrative agencies serves this public purpose.

So then we go on to the second and final code section, again, Government Code Section 6091 that specifically allows radio and television stations to broadcast and telecast the proceedings of all meetings and chairings of state, county, and municipal administrative agencies, basically that are required by law to be open to the public. Now, what this doesn't include is any adjudicative proceedings, the quasi-judicial activities. So the quasi-legislative, the rulemaking, those are generally open to the public. It's the enforcement proceedings, for example, the adjudicative ones that don't fall under this provision regarding news coverage of agencies. The law does require that cameras and other equipment used in these meetings or hearings must operate silently and that they don't require any sort of ancillary lighting that could be disruptive at the agency public hearing.

Now, additionally, Section 6091 allows the administrative agency to waive those silent operation requirements of the camera and other equipment if they so desire. And the administrative agency's presiding officer is able to require the pooling of equipment when that presiding officer deems it necessary in order to limit the number of pieces of equipment, so that the presiding officer can conduct an orderly meeting or hearing. And then, the last piece of this Government Code section is that the law provides that meetings or hearings of these administrative agencies in which they consider appointment, employment, or dismissal of a public officer or employee, or again, the adjudicative matter to hear appeals or complaints or charges brought against individuals are not subject to these provisions of the California Government Code. So again, believe it or not, there's actually some statutory provisions in order to enable news coverage of state and local administrative agencies here in the state of California.