



Fact Sheet: Making Public Meetings More Accessible and Inclusive

Contact: LittleHoover@lhc.ca.gov

In March 2020, Governor Newsom issued an executive order temporarily permitting state boards and commissions to meet online, with no physical location necessary. Through subsequent legislative and gubernatorial actions, the waiver was extended until July 1, 2023.

The Little Hoover Commission looked at the benefits of these short-term changes to the state's open meeting law—the Bagley-Keene Act—and found that California can save taxpayer dollars and make state government more accessible and inclusive by permanently allowing fully remote public meetings.

In its 2021 report, [*The Government of Tomorrow: Online Meetings*](#), the Commission urges the governor and the Legislature to increase access to public meetings and remove barriers to remote participation by amending the Bagley-Keene Act to:

- Require that state boards and commissions provide public access to their meetings in both a physical location and a teleconferencing option.
- Allow for the remote participation of board and commission members without required public disclosure to those locations.

The report also provides results from its survey of state boards and commissions that met remotely during the pandemic. The survey results highlight some of the substantial benefits afforded to the public when boards and commissions hold meetings in which their own members participate via remote technology:

- Over 90 percent of surveyed agencies reported reduced costs due to remote meetings.

- Approximately half of agencies reported better attendance by commission members.
- One-third of agencies responded that they are meeting more often due to their ability to meet remotely.
- Roughly half of agencies that have witnesses said it has been easier to secure high-quality speakers.

The Commission's recommendations will help California ensure that government meetings are as accessible as possible for Californians.

SUPPORTED LEGISLATION

- [*AB 1733 \(Quirk\), 2022*](#): Would have allowed state boards to hold meetings remotely, while also providing a publicly accessible physical location. Would have also enabled board members to participate remotely without disclosing their location.
- [*AB 1795 \(Fong\), 2022*](#): Would have required all state board meetings be accessible for participation both in-person and remotely.
- [*AB 885 \(Quirk\), 2021*](#): Would have required state boards' public meetings be observable audibly and visually. Would have also only required public disclosure of the designated primary physical meeting location.

Last updated: January 2023