



## Action Alert #9 Remote Participation in Public Meetings Headed to Senate Floor

April 20, 2023



**Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**, the full Senate will meet at 2 PM to consider [SB201](#) which amends Louisiana's Open Meetings Law to allow for remote operations (i.e. by electronic means or virtually) of public entities ([Agenda](#)).

Advocates are encouraged to take this opportunity to share their views about remote meeting opportunities with their state Senator.

For more information about amending Open Meetings Law and what changes [SB201](#) proposes, check out the Know the Facts section below. More information about why this issue is so important can be found in [LaCAN's fact sheet](#).

### How to Take Action

Share with your Senator your thoughts, opinions and ideas about Louisiana offering remote meeting opportunities and how you or your loved one would be impacted by allowing, or not allowing, virtual or electronic participation in public meetings.

1. **Email or call** your State Senator *before the full Senate meets* on Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>! Find your member(s) of the committee at the end of this alert.
  - Click [here](#) for State Senator's full contact information.
  - Don't know your State Senator? Click [here](#) and enter your home address. The second person listed will be your State Senator.
  - With your emailed comments, please ensure to include your name, address, phone number, email address, bill number (SB201) and thank your Senator for considering the needs of the disability community.

If you need more information or would like help contacting your State Senator, reach out to your [LaCAN Leader](#) today! The full Senate meeting will be live streamed on the [legislature's website](#). When the meeting is in progress, click the camera icon to access the broadcast.

## Know the Facts

During the 2022 legislative session, [Senate Resolution 147](#) by Sen. Sharon Hewitt created the Remote Operations of Public Entities Taskforce to study the possibility of allowing public entities to meet remotely or virtually. This taskforce developed the recommendations that eventually became [SB201](#). As proposed, SB201 allows:

- Members of the public with a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to participate in meetings electronically and encourages similar measures be implemented to maximize public participation;
- The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, Louisiana Commission for the Deaf, and state and regional advisory councils of the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities to meet virtually 100% of the time; and
- A member of any public body or advisory council with a disability recognized by the ADA to participate in meetings electronically.

The Council and LaCAN thank the taskforce and Sen. Hewitt for considering the needs of individuals with disabilities who serve on public bodies and participate in meetings as members of the public. It is worth noting, however, there are still concerns that need to be addressed:

- Caregivers of individuals with disabilities need similar accommodations when it comes to their participation (i.e. allowed to participate in meetings remotely/virtually). They experience many of the same hardships individuals with disabilities endure which prevents their ability to attend meetings in-person.
- We also believe all “public bodies whose primary focus is on issues dealing with disabilities” should be allowed to meet and conduct its business by electronic means 100% of the time, not just the three exceptions named above.
- Finally, it should be required that all members of the general public be allowed to participate in all public meetings remotely with no caveats. This would ensure everyone, including marginalized groups, who cannot attend meetings in-person will have opportunities to provide stakeholder input.

Remote participation in meetings just makes sense. Technology has come a long way since Open Meetings Law was enacted in 1976. By allowing for remote or virtual participation and representation in public meetings, we can make meetings more transparent and more inclusive of all individuals, including individuals with disabilities and their caregivers.

## Confirm Your Action

- Email your [LaCAN Leader](#) after you take action
- Why confirm your action? This helps the Council know how effective we are reaching you with important information and engaging members across our state in advocacy for systems change.

## Tips & Tools for Advocacy

Looking for tips and tools to help you in your advocacy? Check out the Council's [Advocacy 101](#) page. You can also find tips for:

- [Writing/emailing your legislators](#)
- [Calling your legislators](#)
- [Writing your story](#)

## Contact Us

LaCAN is an initiative of the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information in this email, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108

email: [info@laddc.org](mailto:info@laddc.org)

website: [www.lacanadvocates.org](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil)

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