



UPDATE Action Alert #14 House & Governmental Affairs Continue Discussions on Remote Participation in Public Meetings

May 19, 2023

Wednesday, May 24th, House & Governmental Affairs will meet at 9 AM to *continue* their discussions on [SB201](#) which amends Louisiana's Open Meetings Law to allow for remote operations (i.e. by electronic means or virtually) of public entities ([Agenda](#)).

The committee met last week and decided to defer SB201 after advocates pleaded with committee members to ensure caregivers of individuals with disabilities were allowed to participate in public meetings remotely. Caregivers experience many of the same hardships as individuals with disabilities that prevent their in-person attendance at public meetings. Chairman Stefanski asked to defer the bill one week so members can work with Senate Hewitt on an amendment to make this a possibility!

Advocates are encouraged to take this opportunity to continue sharing their views about remote/virtual meeting opportunities with the House & Governmental Affairs Chair and Committee members.

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

How to Take Action

If you have not done so already, share your thoughts, opinions and ideas about Louisiana offering remote/virtual meeting opportunities and how you or your loved one would be impacted by allowing, or not allowing, virtual or electronic participation in public meetings.

- **Attend Yellow Shirt Day!**
 - WHEN: Wednesday, May 24th at 9:00 AM
 - WHERE: Louisiana State Capitol – Room 3
- **Email or call** the Chair and members of the House & Governmental Affairs Committee *before the committee meets* on Wednesday, May 24th! Find your member(s) of the House & Governmental Affairs Committee at the end of this alert.
- **Email** h&ga@legis.la.gov your public comments about remote operations of public entities:
 - Only statements emailed to the address above and *received before noon on Tuesday, May 23rd*, will be included in the meeting record.
 - With your emailed comments, please ensure to include your name, address, phone number, email address, and bill number (SB201). Don't forget to thank the Chair and committee members for considering the needs of the disability community!

It's important for LaCAN to fill the committee room with yellow shirts to show the importance of this issue! If you plan to attend, need a yellow shirt or want to find out about carpooling options, contact your [LaCAN Leader](#).

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

Additional Information

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 Sen. Hewitt, the taskforce and the full Senate 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 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

website: www.lacanadvocates.org

facebook: www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil

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Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council

Find your member of the House & Governmental Affairs Committee!

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Committee Members are sorted by region. Find your region below!

Louisiana Regions

