

Dear Senators,

I am writing to share my feedback on S.55. I am a resident of Orange Vermont and I served from 2019-2023 on the Town Selectboard.

Serving the Town through COVID, I came to understand first hand both the challenges and the benefits to holding remote meetings.

In small towns like Orange Vermont, I recognize that connectivity can be a challenge to consistent remote access to meetings. However, I think there are ample resources throughout the state to support small towns in learning these tools. I have seen our own Town go from offering a remote option or at the very least a recording consistently at each meeting, to offering no recording at all, depending on who was in leadership and their comfort or willingness to learn tools like Zoom.

I believe there are intricacies in small towns that are unique to our environment and landscape. I recognize that if fiber broadband has not reached a municipality yet, there will inevitably be challenges to hosting a remote or hybrid option. My biggest concern is that if townspeople have requested that option, that leadership fulfill that request.

Thank you for advocating for accessibility for meetings while balancing the needs of small communities like mine for whom high speed internet is not a reality.

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Emily Ruff
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