

State of Vermont Senate Chamber



Montpelier, Vermont

Senate Resolution

By the Committee on Rules,

S.R. 11. Senate resolution relating to temporarily amending the rules of the Senate to include rules during Declared Emergencies.

Whereas, Vermont has been declared by the Governor to be in a State of Emergency as a result of a pandemic known as "COVID-19," and

Whereas, in order to curtail the spread of this pandemic and maintain the health and safety of Vermonters, the Governor has temporarily ordered citizens to separate and practice social distancing, and

Whereas, the Senate and its committees must be able to continue to meet, interview witnesses, debate, deliberate and vote to appropriately address the needs of the State of Vermont during this declared emergency, and

Whereas, technology exists which would enable the Senate to conduct its business remotely during this declared emergency in a manner that is consistent with public access to, and transparency of, its proceedings as demanded by the Vermont Constitution, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate

First, temporary Senate Rule 10A is added to read as follows:

Rule 10A Rule Regarding Remote Meeting and Voting of the Senate during Declared Emergencies

In the event the Governor issues a Declaration of Emergency, during the Declaration of Emergency:

(a) The Rules Committee may authorize that a session of the Senate during such declared emergency be concurrently conducted electronically at which one or more Senators may participate, debate, deliberate and vote in a meeting of the Senate from a remote location. If necessary, the Rules Committee may make this authorization remotely in conformance with this Rule.

(b) Each Senator voting remotely shall do so using both audio and video capability in a format approved by the Rules Committee in consultation with the General Assembly's Office of Information Technology.

(c) The format authorized by the Rules Committee for a session of the Senate shall enable public access in a manner consistent with Vermont's Constitution.

(d) A Senator participating remotely shall be considered present and in attendance at the meeting of the Senate, including for purposes of determining if a quorum is present. Both present and remotely connected Senators compliant with the terms of this Rule shall be counted towards a quorum of the whole.

(e) When a Senator participating remotely desires to address the Senate, the Senator shall notify the Presiding Officer through the electronic means used by the Senator to participate remotely. When recognized, the Presiding Officer

shall announce the Senator and the Senator may speak through the same electronic means as if physically present on the Senate floor.

(f) To the extent practicable, a Senator participating remotely under this rule shall participate from the Senator's senatorial district.

(g) All business of the Senate conducted pursuant to Rule 10A shall be authorized by the Rules Committee in consultation with Committee chairs. No bill may be placed upon the Senate Calendar without prior approval of the Rules Committee.

(h) All votes taken during implementation of this Rule in which one or more Senators are participating remotely by electronic means shall be by roll call.

(i) This Temporary Rule 10A shall expire on the convening of the 2021 biennial session.

Second, temporary Senate Rule 32A is added to read as follows:

Rule 32A Rule Regarding Remote Meeting and Voting of Senate Committees during Declared Emergencies

In the event the Governor issues a Declaration of Emergency, during the Declaration of Emergency:

(a) The Rules Committee is vested with the authority to permit Senate committees (including itself) to meet and vote electronically as the Rules Committee determines appropriate. If necessary, the Rules Committee may make this authorization remotely in conformance with this Rule.

(b) In exercising its authority under section (a), the Rules Committee, to the extent applicable and practicable, shall include the provisions of Rule 10A in its authorizations.

(c) This Temporary Rule 32A shall expire on the convening of the 2021 biennial session.

Third, emergency temporary Rule 29A is deleted.