

House Resolution

House resolution allowing for remote participation during the current declared emergency.

Whereas Governor Philip B Scott declared a state of emergency with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic until April 15, 2020; and

Where the Legislature declared a state of emergency with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic until ????, 2020; and

Whereas to reduce the spread of COVID-19, on March 13, 2020, the Legislature adopted J.R.S. 46 relating to an interim adjournment until March 24, 2020; and

Whereas the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued guidelines for people to maintain a safe social distance of six feet and minimize gatherings to reduce the infection rates of COVID-19; and

Whereas the House of Representatives must meet in order to confront the threat of COVID-19 to the State of Vermont while maintaining CDC public health guidelines that are critical to limiting the spread of COVID-19 infections; and

Whereas in recognition of the declared state of emergency and CDC guidelines the House must complete its business in the safest manner possible to protect Vermonters; and

Whereas the House of Representatives must conduct its business in an open and accessible manner; and

Whereas the Vermont Constitution in Chapter II, Section 6 states “Neither House during the session of the General Assembly, shall, without the consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting...”; and

Whereas to meet its Constitutionally mandated duties the House will conduct its business from the Chamber of the House of Representatives and will allow members to participate remotely; and

Whereas the Vermont Constitution in Chapter II, Section 8 states “The doors of the House in which the General Assembly of this Commonwealth shall sit, shall be open for the admission of all persons who behave decently, except only when the welfare of the State may require them to be shut.”; and

Whereas the welfare of the State is at stake in accordance with the Legislature and Governor’s declaration of a State of Emergency; and

Whereas to allow access to the proceedings of the House of Representatives, members of the public and press shall have access to live streaming of these remote proceedings; and

Whereas to properly conduct the business of the House of Representatives in an open and accessible manner, the House of Representatives amends the Rules and Orders of the House of Representatives to allow for remote participation during this Declaration of a State of Emergency; therefore

Be it resolved that while the State of Vermont is subject to the Legislative Declaration of a State of Emergency, the House of Representatives amends The Rules and Orders of the House of Representatives by adding Temporary Rule 9a to read;

9a. (a) The House of Representatives shall allow remote participation while the Legislature's Declaration of a State of Emergency is in effect. Remote participation shall consist of members being permitted to vote remotely and engage in debate remotely. Members allowed to participate remotely shall validate they are the person connected remotely. Votes conducted remotely shall be compiled by the Clerk of the House. A quorum will be calculated as those members present in the chamber of the House of Representatives and those members who are connected remotely and voting remotely.

(b) This Rules shall expire at the earlier of the (1) the convening of the 2021 biennial session; or (2) the expiration of the Legislature's Declaration of State of Emergency in response to COVID-19 and any extension of this declaration.