

1 Introduced by Committee on Government Operations

2 Date:

3 Subject: Common law; general rights; temporary Open Meeting Law
4 provisions; COVID-19

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to authorize
6 temporary Open Meeting Law procedures in response to COVID-19.

7 An act relating to temporary Open Meeting Law procedures in response to
8 COVID-19

9 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

10 Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; COVID-19 RESPONSE AND OPEN
11 MEETINGS

12 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that during the continued spread
13 of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the State of Vermont public
14 bodies should organize and hold open meetings in a manner that will protect
15 the health and welfare of the public while providing access to the operations of
16 government. Public bodies should meet electronically and provide the public
17 with electronic access to meetings in lieu of a designated physical location.
18 Accordingly, this act sets forth temporary Open Meeting Law procedures in
19 response to COVID-19.

1 Sec. 2. OPEN MEETING LAW; TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF
2 DESIGNATED PHYSICAL MEETING LOCATION
3 REQUIREMENTS

4 (a) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 312, during a declared state of emergency
5 under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 due to COVID-19:

6 (1) a quorum or more of the members of a public body may attend a
7 regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without
8 being physically present at a designated meeting location;

9 (2) the public body shall not be required to designate a physical meeting
10 location where the public may attend; and

11 (3) the members and staff of the public body shall not be required to be
12 physically present at a designated meeting location.

13 (b) When the public body meets electronically under subsection (a) of this
14 section, the public body shall use technology that permits the attendance of the
15 public through electronic means. The public body shall post information on
16 how the public may access meetings electronically and shall include this
17 information in the published agenda for each meeting.

18 (c) In the event of a staffing shortage during a declared state of emergency
19 under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 due to COVID-19, a public body may extend the
20 time limit for the posting of minutes prescribed in 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(2) to not
21 more than 10 days from the date of the meeting.

1 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

2 This act shall take effect on passage.