

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(a), during a declared state of  
5 emergency 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 or other means. The public body shall allow the  
16 public to access the meeting by telephone. The public body shall post  
17 information on how the public may access meetings electronically and shall  
18 include this information in the published agenda for each meeting.

19           (c) In the event of a staffing shortage during a declared state of emergency  
20 under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 due to COVID-19, a public body may extend the

1 time limit for the posting of minutes prescribed in 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(2) to not  
2 more than 10 days from the date of the meeting.

3 Sec. 3. DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE; FISH AND WILDLIFE  
4 BOARD; MEETING REQUIREMENTS IN THE YEAR 2020

5 In the year 2020, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Fish and  
6 Wildlife Board shall not be required to hold the number of regional meetings  
7 as required by 10 V.S.A. §§ 4081(f) (deer) and 4082(b) and (c) (migratory bird  
8 and moose), but shall be required to hold not less than five meetings by  
9 electronic means to ensure adequate public involvement.

10 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on passage.