

From: **Stacey Evers** <[info@sg.actionnetwork.org](mailto:info@sg.actionnetwork.org)>  
Date: Tue, Nov 17, 2020 at 6:37 PM  
Subject: Comments re: Electronic Participation  
To: <[foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov)>

FOIA Council,

I'm a resident of the commonwealth, a US citizen, and past and current appointee to a local government commission. I'm writing to strongly urge you to codify the authority of public bodies to address any subject during emergency electronic meetings, so that they can continue to work on everyone's behalf.

I further urge you to modernize Virginia's stance on electronic meetings outside of an emergency by removing the state limit on individual electronic participation by members of a public body.

This pandemic has shown us that we can function just as efficiently and transparently via electronic participation and, in some cases, even better because the electronic participation allows for participation by a greater number of people. Over the last several months, I've witnessed an uptick in participation -- both by appointees and by members of the public who want to sit in on a public meeting -- because Virginia citizens didn't have to fight traffic, travel long distances, or choose between civic and familial or professional obligations.

We all benefit from a government that reflects the whole community and includes a diversity of voices and experiences, including those who have children, aging parents, or jobs that require travel. The inclusion of such members leads to better public policy for all.

As you know, a majority of states allows electronic participation without restriction. The requirement to provide a reason and for it to be entered into the public record would serve to prevent abuse of this allowance. As it stands, Virginia's law is outdated and needs to change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stacey Evers  
[stacey.evers@icloud.com](mailto:stacey.evers@icloud.com)

Falls Church, Virginia 22046