

From: **Pat Calvert** <[pat@vcnva.org](mailto:pat@vcnva.org)>  
Date: Tue, Aug 4, 2020 at 1:42 PM  
Subject: Comments to FOIA Council  
To: FOIA Council <[foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov)>

Please provide the following comments verbatim to members of the FOIA Council during today's meeting:

comments of Pat Calvert on behalf of [Virginia Conservation Network](#)

"On behalf of more than 135 conservation organizations across the Commonwealth, Virginia Conservation Network appreciates the Advisory Council's consideration to establish an Electronic Meetings Subcommittee. Due to ongoing obstacles experienced by our member organizations and Virginians surrounding multiple Virginia DEQ-facilitated electronic public hearings, stakeholder meetings, regulatory advisory panels, and other public comment opportunities, VCN respectfully requests that this body promptly initiate a subcommittee that will quickly address these continuing impediments and to ensure that Governor Northam's [Executive Order Number Six](#) is carried out both as required and intended -- particularly during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency whereby many members of the public and environmental justice communities are beleaguered by *additional* obstacles to participation. Our partners have documented repeated barriers to public participation and transparency during DEQ-facilitated electronic meetings, including: refusal of broader public participation; inequity of access in decision making processes; censorship of public comments; incomplete summarization of comment submissions by staff; and lack of transparency. Thank you for your consideration in this time-sensitive request."