

From: **Diana Karczmarczyk** <info@sg.actionnetwork.org>
Date: Sun, Nov 15, 2020 at 10:34 AM
Subject: Modernize the Electronic Participation Law
To: <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

FOIA Council,

Thank you for your service on the FOIA Council. I hope you agree that it is important to make public service (whether elected or appointed) more accessible for all Virginians, so that we may achieve more representative, effective public policy. As a member of the public, I benefit from a government that reflects my community and includes a diversity of voices and experiences.

Almost all residents appointed to serve on local/regional Boards and Commissions are volunteers who give their time and expertise to make our communities better. Most elected officials are considered “part-time” and are likely to need other employment.

Advisory boards provide feedback and guidance to local governing bodies and their composition should reflect the population and demographics of the community they serve.

I support increasing flexibility for electronic meetings outside of an emergency as this can make participation in such meetings more accessible for members of the public like me, as well.

This is especially important given COVID, as some public bodies are meeting in person. While current law provides an exception for members who have medical conditions that prevent them from physically attending, the exception does not extend to family members. So if a body is meeting in person and you have a member of your household who is higher-risk for COVID because they are immunocompromised or over the age of 65, after two times of participating electronically, they would have to choose between quarantining to protect that person - or fulfilling their duties. This should not be a choice anyone has to make.

I encourage you to vote this year to remove any state-level limit for how often a member may participate electronically. Please also study in 2021 how there can be further increased flexibility for meeting electronically even when there is not an emergency.

Thank you for considering this request to help reduce barriers for community participation.

Best wishes.

Diana Karczmarczyk
diana_karczmarczyk@yahoo.com
Alexandria, Virginia 22301