

From: **Marj Signer** <marj.signer@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Jun 22, 2021 at 5:57 PM
Subject: Allow Electronic Meetings for appointed boards, commissions
To: <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

To Members of the Virginia Freedom of Information Council:

I write as the legislative vice-president of the Virginia chapter of NOW (National Organization for Women), a statewide organization of women and men. We support allowing electronic meetings for appointed boards and commissions.

When I was appointed for two terms to the Virginia Council on Women, I was honored to serve but only able to do so because I could take time from work, my children did not need me at home in the afternoon, and I had transportation. (There was no reimbursement for expenses or per diem - we paid for our own transportation and lunch.) During that time, several appointees attended one or two meetings and resigned, due to the inconvenience of in-person meetings and the time needed for travel. I now realize that I was quite privileged to be able to serve on that body.

We now have ample experience of meeting electronically due to the pandemic. We know that electronic meetings for local and regional bodies - whose members are appointed, not elected - are successful. Barriers such as transportation, work leave requirements and childcare are removed or lessened. Virginians from all corners of the Commonwealth and from all sectors of society can more easily participate. Electronic communications has become the norm; modernizing our meeting format makes sense. As for objections, as a former journalist, I feel confident that reporters can "get the story" by phone and email, as they do now.

Let's make government more accessible to more people!

Thank you for your consideration.
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