

## Democratic Values

An in-person meetings to discuss the public's business is a bedrock principle of American democracy. Members should be able to see each other as they discuss the issues that will impact them. Citizens have a place to engage with each other.

## Resentment

Not all members like or want virtual meetings; they value in-person participation. Note recent intra-board conflicts over virtual participation in Loudoun County (schools) and the Town of Lovettsville.

## Tools at Hand

FOIA already allows limitless individual remote participation for temporary/permanent disability and to tend to the health needs of a family member. FOIA already allows limited individual remote participation for any reason whatsoever. FOIA already allows electronic/virtual public viewing and participation.

## All Public Bodies

For every advisory committee on aging, there is one for book selection for public school libraries or police accountability, issues with enormous public interest. Advisory boards will advise the public body, and the public deserves to know what that advice is and how it was formed, especially given that minutes are not required for such meetings. See 2.2-3707(l)(iv).

## Case Law

In *Suffolk School Board v. Wahlstrom* (2023), the Virginia Supreme Court said, "the General Assembly has recognized that there are differences between in-person and virtual meetings, and thus, ... the concepts are neither indistinguishable nor interchangeable.

## Logistics

Audio and video quality can be poor and can sometimes fail; camera feeds can be manipulated. Meetings and public comment periods can be hijacked by miscreants (e.g., Charlottesville meeting was flooded by Nazi admirers using fake names).

# No limits on virtual public meetings

Supporters argue that enabling public bodies, especially advisory bodies, to conduct their meetings electronically using platforms like Zoom as often as they like is a "common-sense" proposition that eliminates "unnecessarily restrictive" obstacles. These obstacles include transportation challenges, childcare responsibilities, the need to care for the health of loved ones, difficulties associated with hearing impairment, and overall economic hardships, especially among the elderly.