

REFORMERS URGE GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT NEW MEASURES TO DO THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS

Citizens Union, Common Cause/NY, League of Women Voters New York, NYPIRG, Reinvent Albany, and encourage lawmakers to vote remotely

Among the many challenges that New York State faces in coping with the massive impact of COVID-19, is the disruption to the normal in-person functioning of government. New York State government – its executive, legislative and judicial branches, both state and local – needs to adapt to remote systems and continue doing the people's business just like the largest public school system in the country, companies large and small, non-profits, universities and service providers are doing.

Thanks to widely available technology, government can work even in these extraordinary times. Now more than ever, New Yorkers expect government to address the problems that we all face while meeting its constitutional and legal responsibilities.

The Executive should continue to adhere to its public accountability requirements through ensuring compliance with accountability standards, by:

- Providing public access to observe government proceedings, in meetings that would be public under the New York Open Meetings Law via live and recorded video available on government websites;
- Providing public ability to participate in government proceedings via videoconference where possible and, at a minimum, via telephone and submission of written testimony or comment;
- Identifying official participants contemporaneously in all public meetings or sessions via videoconference either through oral announcement or subtitles;
- Recording all open sessions of meetings and making such recordings available to the public via government websites; and
- Posting minutes of meetings online alongside archived recordings.

We appreciate that the Legislature has new responsibilities in helping constituents and local officials deal with the current crisis, but they should also continue to pass laws, hold committee hearings, and plan for recovery. Neighboring states like Connecticut and Pennsylvania are already making provisions for lawmakers to convene and vote remotely. New York can too.

Lastly, we urge the Governor and legislative leaders to regularly brief the media on issues under consideration. We applaud the State Legislature and the Governor for working to keep the public informed during this difficult time and we hope to see the bipartisan collaboration continue after the crisis has been resolved.