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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE CLEARS PATH FOR GOVERNMENTAL BODIES TO MEET TELEPHONICALLY OR BY VIDEOCONFERENCE DURING CORONAVIRUS DISASTER

March 16, 2020

Governor's Office Clears Path for Governmental Bodies to Meet Telephonically or by Videoconference During Coronavirus Disaster

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Governor Abbott's office today approved a request by the Office of the Attorney General to temporarily suspend a limited number of open meeting laws in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) disaster. This action will allow governmental bodies to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference to advance the public health goal of limiting face-to-face meetings (also called "social distancing") to slow the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Importantly, however, this action does not suspend requirements that governmental bodies conduct meetings in a transparent and accessible manner. Specifically, governmental bodies are still be required to do the following:

- provide online written notice containing a public toll-free dial-in number or a free-of-charge videoconference link, as well as an electronic copy of any agenda packet, before conducting telephonic or video conference meetings;
- provide the public with access and a means to participate in those meetings, preferably through two-way audio or video connections; and
- provide the public with access to a recording of those meetings.

Please [click here](#)

(<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/images/admin/2020/Press/OperationsMeeting%20Laws%20Subject%20to%20Temporary%20Suspension.pdf>) for a complete list of the open meeting provisions that have been temporarily suspended. State agencies and local governmental bodies may contact the Office of the Attorney General with question about the suspension order by telephone at (888) 672-6787 or via email at [TOMA@oag.texas.gov \(mailto:TOMA@oag.texas.gov\)](mailto:TOMA@oag.texas.gov). Officials with questions about teleconference and videoconference capabilities offered by the Texas Department of Information Resources should visit [dir.texas.gov \(http://dir.texas.gov/\)](http://dir.texas.gov) or call [\(512\) 475-4700 \(tel:\(512\)%20475-4700\)](tel:(512)475-4700).

For information on the spread or treatment of Coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit the [Texas Department of State Health Services \(https://dshts.texas.gov/coronavirus/\)](https://dshts.texas.gov/coronavirus/).

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