



Senate Bill 482

Title of Issue: Open Meetings Act - Remote Meeting Option

ISACo Position: Support

To: Senate Executive Committee

Date: March 9, 2021

From: Joe McCoy, Executive Director
Illinois State Association of Counties

The Illinois State Association of Counties (ISACo) supports SB 482.

The legislation would amend the Open Meetings Act to permit public bodies to hold virtual meetings when the head of the public body determines such meetings are warranted.

Under current law virtual meetings can be held when the Governor or Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health issues a disaster declaration involving a public health concern that would affect a public body. This provision made the resumption of local public meetings possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ISACo believes that vesting the decision to hold virtual meetings with the head of a public body would prevent local governments from having to wait on an official disaster declaration by the Governor or Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. Waiting for an official declaration may compel the local public body to forgo one or more meetings that could otherwise be held using available technology.

There may also be reasons for a local government to hold a virtual meeting in the absence of a disaster and this legislation would allow the head of a public body to make that determination based upon what is in the best interest of the public body.

It is important to note that the bill retains the basic transparency requirements under the Open Meetings Act such as the provision of proper notice of virtual meetings and ensuring that interested members of the public can listen to the discussion and decisions being made during the meetings. The presiding officer is also required to provide the public with the reason for holding the meeting virtually.

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly forced local governments and the public to adapt to, and become more comfortable with, the use of technology to hold meetings. Local government officials have become proficient with this technology and should be able to employ it when circumstances suggest doing so is in their best interest.

For these reasons, ISACo supports SB 482 and urges that it be enacted into law.