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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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Bill No: SB 707  
Author: Durazo (D), et al.  
Amended: 9/5/25 in Assembly  
Vote: 21

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SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/2/25

AYES: Durazo, Arreguín, Laird, Seyarto, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi, Cabaldon

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/22/25

AYES: Umberg, Arreguín, Ashby, Durazo, Laird, Stern, Wahab, Weber Pierson,  
Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Niello, Allen, Caballero, Valladares

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

SENATE FLOOR: 24-6, 6/3/25

AYES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon,  
Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney,  
Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber  
Pierson, Wiener

NOES: Alvarado-Gil, Dahle, Grove, Jones, Seyarto, Strickland

NO VOTE RECORDED: Caballero, Choi, Grayson, Hurtado, Menjivar, Niello,  
Ochoa Bogh, Reyes, Rubio, Valladares

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 42-16 , 9/13/25 – Roll call not available.

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**SUBJECT:** Open meetings: meeting and teleconference requirements

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill makes various changes to the rules for local agencies to hold public meetings pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act).

*Assembly Amendments* of 9/5/25 (1) require local agencies to take specified steps when there is a disruption to a broadcast of a meeting; (2) clarify the languages that must be translated and revise the special districts subject to this bill's new requirements; (3) delay implementation of new requirements to July 1, 2026; (4) clarify that this bill's new requirements for translation and public participation do not affect or supersede applicable civil rights, nondiscrimination, and public access laws; (5) explicitly authorize remote participation as a reasonable accommodation for a disability and make related changes; (6) authorize a new type of just cause for participating remotely due to military service; (7) allows subsidiary bodies that teleconference to present recommendations at a meeting of their governing body; (8) establish limits on the number of times members of multijurisdictional bodies can teleconference; (9) extend the authority to limit disruptions to members of the public participating remotely; and (10) make other changes.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Guarantees, pursuant to Article I, Section 3 of the California Constitution, that "the people have the right to instruct their representatives, petition government for redress of grievances, and assemble freely to consult for the common good." This includes a right to access information concerning the meetings and writings of public officials.
- 2) Requires, pursuant to the Constitution, local agencies to comply with certain state laws that outline the basic requirements for public access to meetings and public records. If a subsequent bill modifies these laws, it must include findings demonstrating how it furthers the public's access to local agencies and their officials.
- 3) Provides, under the Ralph M. Brown Act, guidelines for how local agencies must hold public meetings:
  - a) Defines a "meeting" as "any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and location, including teleconference locations, to hear, discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."
  - b) Requires local agencies to notice meetings in advance, including the posting of an agenda, and requires these meetings to be open and accessible to the public.

- c) Requires members of the public to have an opportunity to comment on agenda items, and generally prohibits deliberation or action on items not listed on the agenda.
  - d) If a member of the public, including the respective district attorney, believes a local agency violated the Brown Act, it must first send an order to the local agency to correct the violation. If the local agency disagrees with the complaint and does not correct it, the submitter can pursue the complaint through the courts. If the court agrees with the complaint, outcomes range from invalidating certain actions of the local agency to a misdemeanor.
- 4) Authorizes the legislative body of a local agency to use teleconferencing for the benefit of the public and the legislative body of a local agency in connection with any meeting or proceeding authorized by law, provided that the teleconferenced meeting complies with all of the following conditions:
- a) Teleconferencing, as authorized, may be used for all purposes in connection with any meeting within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. All votes taken during a teleconferenced meeting must be by rollcall.
  - b) If the legislative body elects to use teleconferencing, it must post agendas at all teleconference locations and conduct teleconference meetings in a manner that protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or in the public appearing before the legislative body of the local agency.
  - c) Each teleconferencing location must be identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting or proceeding, and each teleconference location must be accessible to the public.
  - d) During the teleconference, at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body shall participate from locations within the boundaries of the territory over which the local agency exercised jurisdiction, except as otherwise specified.
  - e) The agenda must provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly, as the Brown Act requires for in-person meetings, at each teleconference location.
  - f) For purposes of these requirements, “teleconference” means a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through either audio or video, or both.

- 5) Authorizes, until January 1, 2026, a local agency to use teleconferencing for a public meeting without complying with the Brown Act's teleconferencing quorum, meeting notice, and agenda requirements, in any of the following circumstances:
- a) The legislative body holds a meeting during a proclaimed state of emergency as specified;
  - b) Allows members of legislative bodies to participate remotely for "just cause" and "emergency circumstances" as specified.
  - c) The legislative body is a community college student organization or a neighborhood council.

This bill:

- 1) Revises and recasts existing alternative teleconferencing provisions, until January 1, 2030, by providing a standard set of requirements that must be complied with, including:
- a) Clearly identifying the location of the in-person meeting on the agenda, which must be open to the public and within the boundaries of the local agency's jurisdiction;
  - b) Providing means by which the public may remotely hear and visually observe the meeting, and remotely address the legislative body;
  - c) Providing notice of the means for the public to access the meeting and offer public comment;
  - d) Identifying and including an opportunity for all persons to attend and address the legislative body directly via a call-in or internet-based service option, including at any in-person location;
  - e) Including in meeting minutes any member of the legislative body who participates from a remote location;
  - f) Having and implementing a procedure for receiving and swiftly resolving requests for reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
  - g) Requiring instructions on joining the meeting by the telephonic or internet-based service option; and

- h) Identifying and making available to subsidiary bodies a list of meeting locations they may use to conduct their meetings.
- 2) Authorizes, until January 1, 2030, alternative teleconferencing provisions for an eligible subsidiary body, which is defined as one which:
    - a) Serves exclusively in an advisory capacity;
    - b) Cannot take final action on legislation, regulations, contracts, licenses, permits, or any other entitlements, grants, or allocations of funds;
    - c) Does not have a majority of its membership made up of members of the legislative body that created it or its staff; and
    - d) Does not have subject matter jurisdiction over elections, privacy, budgets, police oversight, taxes or related spending, or removing materials from, or restricting access to, library materials.
  - 3) Requires authorization by the governing body for a subsidiary body to teleconference, and establishes procedures for subsidiary body teleconferencing, including that:
    - a) The governing body must hear recommendations from the subsidiary body upon request of the subsidiary body, as specified; and
    - b) Elected officials on subsidiary bodies cannot participate by teleconferencing unless they participate from a publicly accessible location.
  - 4) Authorizes, until January 1, 2030, alternative teleconferencing provisions for an eligible multijurisdictional body, which is defined as a legislative body that includes representatives from more than one county, city, city and county, special district, or joint powers entity.
  - 5) Expands the teleconferencing flexibility authorized during state-declared emergencies to include local emergencies.
  - 6) Authorize a new type of just cause for participating remotely due to military service.
  - 7) Specifies that the teleconferencing flexibilities authorized by the bill may be used in conjunction.

- 8) Lowers the vote requirement to a simple majority for members of a neighborhood council to meet via teleconference.
- 9) Allows members of legislative bodies with physical or mental disabilities to participate remotely and count towards any applicable in-person quorum requirements.
- 10) Requires, commencing July 1, 2026 until January 1, 2030, eligible legislative bodies, as defined, to:
  - a) Provide a two-way telephonic option or audiovisual platform for the public at all their open and public meetings, as specified. If it elects to use a two-way audiovisual platform, it must publicly post and provide a call-in option, and have active captioning functions included in the system. The eligible legislative body must adopt a policy for restoring service in the event of a disruption to the broadcast, and requires good faith efforts consistent with that policy.
  - b) Make efforts to encourage residents, including those in underrepresented communities and non-English-speaking communities, to participate in public meetings, by creating and maintaining a public meetings website and providing public meeting information to the public, as specified.
  - c) Translate agendas into applicable languages, as specified.
- 11) Provide that the requirements in 9) shall not be construed to affect or supersede any other applicable civil rights, nondiscrimination, or public access laws.
- 12) Removes the ability of any legislative body to decline to provide public comment on items previously discussed in committee if the subject matter of the committee pertains to elections, budgets, police oversight, privacy, removing from, or restricting access to, materials available in public libraries, or taxes or related spending proposals, as well as any committees that did not participate with an in-person quorum.
- 13) Extends the existing authority of a legislative body to remove or limit participation by persons who engage in behavior that actually disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of the meeting, including existing limitations upon that authority, to members of the public participating in a meeting via a two-way telephonic service or a two-way audiovisual platform.
- 14) Makes various other changes to the Brown Act.

## Background

On March 19, 2025, the Senate Local Government held a hearing on the Brown Act called Meeting the Moment: Strengthening Community Voices in Local Government Meetings. At this hearing, the Committee:

- Heard from experts on the factors that make for effective local meetings;
- Learned strategies for communicating with the community throughout disasters;
- Considered different local agencies' experiences holding public meetings; and
- Engaged with community groups to identify strategies to improve local agency meetings.

The Committee heard that public meetings are an imperfect, but valuable, tool for public participation, and key to democratic responsibility. The challenge local agencies face is a gap between what is administratively sustainable and politically acceptable. The City of Los Angeles brought up their recent experiences dealing with the aftermath of the January 2025 fires, and setting up disaster recovery centers as well as worker and family support centers, ensuring those affected, regardless of their language ability, had access to services. Various local agencies highlighted the challenges they have faced with disruptions during teleconferenced meetings, and, along with some community groups, expressed an interest in further expansion of recent teleconference flexibility. Finally, the Committee heard concerns about how additional flexibility could lead to public transparency challenges. For more information on the Brown Act, please see the Committee's backgrounder and recording of the meeting.

## Comments

*Purpose of this bill.* According to the author, "The Brown Act since 1954 has served as the minimum standard for how the public can access their local meetings and for how local agencies conduct meetings. As technology has improved, the Legislature has made thoughtful changes to modernize the Brown Act. In addition, the pandemic has helped bring along other technological advancements.

"SB 707 will modernize Brown Act rules for government bodies to improve transparency and expand public access. This bill will help governments better serve their communities and increase the public's access to meetings, especially for disabled, working, and non-English speaking communities. Since the bill's introduction, and at every stage of the legislative process, my office has worked

closely with stakeholders – listening to their feedback and incorporating many of their suggested changes. This bill signifies a momentous time in the history of Brown Act where many stakeholders worked together in a fair compromise.

“SB 707 presents an opportunity to strengthen our governments and empower community members to be engaged. We have thoughtfully integrated provisions from other Brown Act-related bills authored by Senator Arreguin, Assemblymember Fong, Assemblymember Arambula, and Assemblymember Rubio. Ultimately, we aim to create robust public meetings and increase participation across the state. If we don't make updates to the Brown Act, we lose on extending current provisions that give cities and counties flexibility, and we lose the opportunity to further engage with the public.

“SB 707 creates a historic path forward to strengthen our governments and empower our community members statewide - it's time for Brown Act to be modernized.”

### **Related/Prior legislation**

SB 707 includes provisions substantially similar to those in the following bills:

- AB 259 (Rubio) extends, until January 1, 2030, the sunset date on teleconferencing flexibility for just cause and emergency situations.
- AB 409 (Arambula) extends, until January 1, 2030, the sunset date on the provisions of law enabling teleconferencing flexibility for community college organizations.
- AB 467 (Fong) extends, until January 1, 2030, the sunset date on teleconferencing flexibility for the City of Los Angeles neighborhood councils.
- SB 239 (Arreguín) allows subsidiary bodies of a local agency to use teleconferencing without having to notice and make publicly accessible each teleconference location.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No   Fiscal Com.: Yes   Local: Yes

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- Ongoing costs to local agencies of an unknown but likely significant amount to meet new Brown Act requirements, such as providing translation services and two-way telephonic services or audiovisual platforms for public meetings, and performing numerous new administrative duties. Local



agencies may also incur additional legal costs due to increased legal exposure. However, any costs imposed on local agencies as a result of this bill are not state-reimbursable. Proposition 42, passed by voters on June 3, 2014, amended the state Constitution to require all local governments to comply with the California Public Records Act (CPRA) and the Brown Act, and eliminated reimbursement to local agencies for costs of complying with the CPRA and Brown Act.

- Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown amount to the courts to adjudicate violations of this bill in civil actions brought to enforce this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The fiscal year 2025-26 state budget provides \$82 million ongoing General Fund to the Trial Court Trust Fund for court operations.

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 9/12/25)

All Voting Members of the North Westwood Neighborhood Council  
Association of Bay Area Governments  
California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS  
California Collaborative for Long-Term Services and Supports  
California In-Home Supportive Services Consumer Alliance  
California Senior Legislature  
California State Association of Counties  
Central City Neighborhood Partners  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights  
Democracy Winters  
Fresno Council Member Nick Richardson  
Fresno County Supervisor Nathan Magsig  
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality  
Korean American Federation of Los Angeles  
Koreatown Youth and Community Center Inc.  
La Defensa  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment  
Rural County Representatives of California  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

Urban Counties of California  
Yolo County In-Home Supportive Services Advisory Committee

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 9/12/25)

City of Artesia  
California Municipal Clerks Association  
City of Carlsbad  
City of Foster City  
City of La Palma  
City of Paramount  
City of San Marcos  
City of Santa Monica  
City of Santa Rosa  
City of Willows  
County of Kern  
League of California Cities  
Town of Hillsborough

**ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:** According to the League of California Cities, “The League of California Cities must respectfully oppose SB 707 unless amended. While we appreciate the author’s intent and willingness to engage stakeholders, the bill, as drafted, imposes inequitable, prescriptive, and unfunded mandates. ... The bill applies only to certain cities based on arbitrary population cutoffs. For example, roughly 100 smaller cities would be exempt from the new rules. However, 100 cities of the same size would need to comply simply because they are in larger counties. ... SB 707 requires new audiovisual systems, translation services, staffing, and website redesigns—at a time of significant fiscal uncertainty. This bill requires eligible legislative bodies to have remote public comment. The Legislature and state boards are exempt from this requirement and many others. Cal Cities opposes changes to open meeting laws that solely apply to California cities and local officials, unless such law or regulation also applies equally to the state of California and state officials. [Click here to enter text.](#)

Prepared by: Anton Favorini-Csorba / L. GOV. / (916) 651-4119  
9/13/25 1:04:27

\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*