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Public Law Update - SB 707 Provides Significant Changes to the Brown Act

Senate Bill 707, signed into law on October 3, 2025, proposes the most extensive modernization of the Brown Act (Gov. Code, § 54950 et seq.)^[1] in years, introducing sweeping changes designed to strengthen public participation and expand remote teleconferencing access. While aiming to improve transparency and engagement in public meetings, the bill also presents local agencies with important considerations regarding implementation logistics and resource planning.

Local public agencies should become familiar with these changes and consider updating meeting procedures to reflect the new Brown Act provisions prior to the effective date of January 1, 2026.

Social Media Exception, Sunset Removal, and Mandatory Brown Act Distribution

The bill amends section 54952.2 to remove the sunset date for social media-related provisions, originally effective on January 1, 2021 via AB 992, which allow officials to communicate with members of the public on social media while prohibiting them from directly responding to anything another member of the same legislative body posts regarding agency business. Under SB 707, section 54952.7 mandates that a local agency must provide a copy of the Brown Act to any person who is elected or appointed to serve as a member of the legislative body of the agency. Previously, the distribution was permissive and limited to specified persons.

Teleconferencing as a Reasonable Accommodation

New subdivision (c) to section 54953 expressly articulates that legislative body members may participate by teleconference as an accommodation for a disability. The member must participate using both audio and visual technology and must disclose if another adult is in the room with them, and the general nature of that person's relationship with the member; the teleconferencing member's participation counts towards a quorum at the same physical location as the members participating in person. The traditional teleconferencing rules do not apply here, and neither do the

requirements of added sections 54953.8 through 54953.8.7 (see below).

Local agencies' obligation to implement a procedure "for receiving and swiftly resolving requests for reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities," in accordance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, has not changed, but this requirement is moved from section 54953(g) to added section 54953.8(b)(8).

Expanded Teleconferencing Requirements

SB 707 expands and reorganizes the provisions relating to teleconferencing. The traditional rules for teleconferenced meetings remain unchanged in section 54953(b), but teleconferencing rules in section 54953(d), (e), and (f), for health authorities and during a proclaimed emergency, are moving to their own new sections, 54953.8.1 and 54953.8.2, respectively.

The provisions for the "just cause" basis for remote legislative body meeting participation initially introduced in 2022 via AB 2449 are now set forth in section 54953.8.3. The bill extends the sunset for these "just cause" provisions through December 31, 2029, and the definition of "just cause" now includes certain prior bases for associated "emergency circumstances," such as caregiving, illness, family medical emergencies, and military service. "Emergency circumstances" will now be included in the definition of "just cause."

The bill also adds teleconferencing rules for eligible neighborhood councils (added section 54953.8.4), eligible community college student organizations (added section 54953.8.5), eligible subsidiary bodies (added section 54953.8.6), and eligible multijurisdictional legislative bodies (added section 54953.8.7).

In added section 54953.8, the bill gathers the procedural and attendance requirements for sections 54953.8.1 through 54953.8.7.

Remote Access and Multilingual Outreach Requirements

The bill adds a new section 54953.4, which imposes certain requirements on eligible legislative bodies from July 1, 2026 through December 31, 2029. Specifically, it requires eligible legislative bodies to offer public remote access to open meetings via telephonic or audiovisual platforms, and recess meetings for at least one hour to restore service if remote access fails. "Eligible legislative body" is defined in the bill to include city councils and county boards of

cities/counties with populations of 30,000 or more, city councils in counties with 600,000 or more people, and certain large special districts—those with substantial populations, employees, or revenues. These bodies must translate meeting agendas and participation instructions into applicable languages (those spoken by at least 20% of the relevant population with limited English proficiency), provide a multilingual, accessible public webpage explaining comment procedures and meetings, and assist with interpretation requests. Section 54953.4 also requires outreach efforts to underrepresented and non-English-speaking communities, electronic public access to materials, and prohibits liability for the accuracy of translations or interpretation provided by others. Agencies must also publicly adopt a disruption policy for remote meetings, and specific exemptions are set for meetings largely focused on property, emergencies, or unique circumstances.

Public Recording Rights

The bill amends section 54953.5 to reaffirm the public's right to record open legislative body meetings. Specifically, it broadens the recording right by removing limiting references to older, specific recording devices (i.e., audio or video recorder or still or motion picture camera).

Exemptions to Public Comment

The bill amends section 54954.3 to broaden the exemptions to the allowance for a legislative body to skip public comment for certain items already considered by a prior committee comprised exclusively of legislative body members. Now, in order to bypass comment, there must not have been a substantial change to the item since committee consideration; the prior committee meeting must have had a physical, in-person quorum; and the committee must not have primary jurisdiction over certain sensitive or high interest areas (e.g., elections, budgets, and police oversight).

Special Meetings Requirements

SB 707 modifies section 54956, regarding special meetings, to expand the 24-hour posting and distribution requirements to all legislative bodies by removing prior exemptions for certain legislative bodies. It also expands the prohibition on calling special meetings to consider local agency salaries or compensation for local agency executives to also include those for legislative bodies themselves.

Authority to Remove Disruptive

Participants

The bill amends section 54957.95 to extend the authority of a presiding legislative body member to remove a person for disrupting a teleconferenced meeting. It also adds a new section 54957.96 to authorize the removal or limit participation of a person participating in the meeting via two-way audiovisual platform or two-way telephonic services if that person “actually disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of the meeting.”

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, Section references will be to the California Government Code.

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