



June 14, 2021

Re: H 5891 Sub A

House State Government and Elections  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI

Dear Chairman Shanley and members of the committee:

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island is a strong advocate for open meetings and the importance of transparency in government to the functioning of democracy. There are advantages and disadvantages to holding in-person, virtual, and hybrid virtual and in-person meetings.

Virtual meetings were essential during the health crisis, and allowed the government to continue to function. They allow many more people to conveniently observe and participate in meetings that affected them than if they have to drive somewhere and find parking or take the bus to attend.

However, there are significant problems that can occur with these formats. H 5891 is an attempt to make virtual and hybrid virtual and in-person meetings as fully transparent as in-person meetings. The League of Women Voters would like to emphasize some issues that still need to be addressed by the bill:

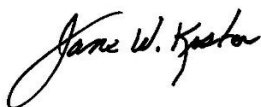
It is important that the public and reporters be able to access the documents on the internet far enough ahead of the meetings that they have time to ponder them and their implications. The current bill only requires that the documents be available to the public on the internet at the time the meeting begins. This is inadequate.

If meetings are held virtually or in hybrid format, all participants should be visible at all times and their names should be clearly visible so that viewers know who is speaking.

Recordings of public meetings should be retained following the state archive laws, and should be available free to requestors immediately following the meetings, or as soon as technologically possible.

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island recognizes the work that has gone into this bill but feels the revisions suggested above are necessary. We feel the law should be reviewed and reevaluated after one year rather than two.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane W. Koster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jane W. Koster  
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