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June 07, 2021

California Governor Newsom Extends Flexibility to Hold Virtual Public Meetings

As part of a series of emergency measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-29-20, allowing local and state agencies to hold virtual meetings via teleconference and to make meetings accessible electronically notwithstanding the open meeting requirements in the Bagley-Keene Act and the Brown Act. These provisions, signed in March 2020, were due to expire on June 15, 2021.

On June 2, 2021, in response to a written request by a coalition of local government agencies, the governor announced that N-29-20 will not terminate on June 15, and that state and local agencies can continue to conduct virtual public meetings as needed. The governor did not set a new expiration date for N-29-20 and committed to provide advance notice before rescinding the order, to provide the agencies the time needed to meet statutory and logistical requirements.

Under the governor's announcement, state and local agencies may continue to hold meetings in California via teleconferencing and allow members of the public to observe and address the meeting by telephone or the internet. All requirements of the Bagley-Keene Act and Brown Act requiring the physical presence of agency officials, staff, or the public at public meetings remain suspended.

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