



Senate Box 203078  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3078  
(717) 787-7680  
Fax (717) 772-4524  
lgc@palegislature.us  
www.lgc.state.pa.us

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**SB 1130 (Printer's No. 1827) Analysis**

**Date: June 28, 2022**

**Amending the Sunshine Act to facilitate internet broadcast of local meetings and permit public comment by telecommunications device.**

**Prime Sponsor: Senator Dush**

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**A. Synopsis of Bill**

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This bill amends the Sunshine Act to facilitate the creation of local rules allowing meetings to be broadcast online and allow public comment via authorized telecommunications devices.

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**B. Summary and Analysis of Bill**

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**The Senate Local Government Committee amended SB 1130 on June 28, 2022. The Committee's amendments appear in *italics*.**

- I. **Permitting local rules for internet broadcast.** Political subdivisions and municipal authorities would be permitted to adopt local rules facilitating the broadcast of its meetings using through its website, social media applications or other mobile application. The following conditions apply:
  - a. A broadcast meeting must include the entire meeting other than executive sessions.
  - b. If the meeting recording is made available for later viewing, no portion of the broadcast meeting may be omitted, *unless it is essential to exclude speech at the meeting that is not protected by the First Amendment or may expose the agency to legal liability if included.*
    - i. *If the recording or broadcast is edited, those changes must by explained in the meeting minutes.*
    - ii. *If a recording or broadcast is edited, the local agency must retain the original copy of the unedited recording for at least one year following the meeting.*
  - c. If the meeting recording is made available on a website, the internet address to the recording must be listed in the minutes.
- II. **Permitting local rules for acceptance of public comment.** Political subdivisions and municipal authorities would be permitted to adopt local rules permitting the public to offer remote public

comment by “authorized telecommunications device” in addition to in-person public comment. The following conditions apply:

- a. “Authorized telecommunications device” constitutes a device which allows, at minimum, two-way communications by audio.
- b. The agency holding a meeting with local rules may require a prospective member of the public offering remote public comment to demonstrate that the person is entitled to public comment under existing law.
- c. The agency may adopt a process to create a que for interested members of the public to sign up for an opportunity to offer comment.
- d. If the agency has advertised that the public will be able to offer remote public comment, official action must either be postponed until the next meeting if remote public comment becomes unavailable *due to an internet outage or technological failure of the local agency* or provide a backup procedure to allow public comment to be accepted during the meeting by speakerphone.

**III. Public notification and records.** A political subdivision or municipal authority offering internet broadcast or remote public comment under I and II must include information regarding the broadcast or public comment to in its existing public notices and meeting minutes, *including the meeting agenda. The meeting agenda must also provide information on where to find local rules adopted for the acceptance of public comment, if applicable.*

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### **C. Relevant Current Law**

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The Sunshine Act provides for the requirement and manner of the conduct of public meetings by an agency whenever an official action is taken. Existing provisions of the Sunshine Act do not address broadcast of meetings or acceptance of virtual public comment by political subdivisions or municipal authorities.

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### **D. Background of Bill**

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During the Covid-19 pandemic many local agencies experimented with business meetings made more accessible to the public via internet broadcast on familiar platforms including Facebook, YouTube and others, and in some cases, permitting the acceptance of public comment using teleconference and video conference services. After the Covid-19 emergency rules expired, communities sought additional clarity and flexibility regarding the ongoing use of these technologies.

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### **E. Effect of Bill**

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This bill would provide clear standards facilitating optional internet broadcast of, and acceptance of virtual public comment at, meetings by political subdivisions and authorities. These provisions are optional, and would impose no further requirements on a political subdivision or authority that holds a public meeting without virtual public comment or internet broadcast.

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### **F. Issues, Policy Questions and Stakeholder Feedback**

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This proposal was shared with representatives from the Office of Open Records, The Department of Community and Economic Development, County Commissioners of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Municipal League, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners, Pennsylvania State

Association of Boroughs, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, and Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association. Constructive feedback from several organizations was incorporated into the final language of the bill as introduced.

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**G. Bill History**

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This bill has not been introduced in any previous session.