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Gov. Kevin Stitt signs fast-tracked virtual meetings legislation



by [CARMEN FORMAN](#)

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Gov. Kevin Stitt signs the state budget with Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat, accompanied by his daughter, Olivia, 7, left, and House Speaker Tom McCall, right, during a bill and budget signing session in the Blue Room of the Capitol Friday, May 24, 2019. [Doug Hoke/The Oklahoman]

Government boards, commissions, city councils and more can resume meeting virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gov. Kevin Stitt on Wednesday signed legislation to temporarily modify the state's Open Meeting Act to allow public bodies to hold teleconference or videoconference.

In his first bill signing this year, Stitt signed [Senate Bill 1031](#) by Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat, R-Oklahoma City, and House Floor Leader Jon Echols, R-Oklahoma City.

"We had constituents, we had local school boards, we had state agencies all wanting this to be able to meet virtually," Stitt said during the signing ceremony with legislative leaders at the Oklahoma state Capitol.

The legislation reinstates the virtual meetings exemption [that expired in November](#). It also requires public bodies to provide

materials to virtual participants and prevents groups from meeting in person after posting notice of a virtual meeting.

Many government and nonprofit governing boards and commissions are required to follow the Open Meeting Act to ensure open to the public and the press.

As Oklahoma's COVID-19 cases spiked in December, nearly 200 local elected officials and nonprofit leaders asked Stitt to bring the Oklahoma Legislature into a special session to reinstate the virtual meetings exemption.

Earlier this week, Echols said it would have been difficult to address the legislation in a quick special session because legislation requires five days for a bill to pass through the House and the Senate. Once the regular legislative session kicked off Feb. 1, [he tracked the virtual meetings legislation](#), passing the bill in record time.

House Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, also said the Legislature was stymied because last year was an election year and the Oklahoma Legislature wasn't formally organized until lawmakers met for organizational day in early January.

Because of an emergency clause on [SB 1031](#), the bill took effect immediately upon Stitt's signature.

The virtual meetings allowance is effective until Feb. 15, 2022 or until 30 days after the governor's emergency declaration is renewed or he renews his emergency declaration throughout the pandemic.



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