



FLOOR ALERT

On behalf of the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts (CARPD), League of California Cities (CalCities), Urban Counties of California (UCC), Rural County Representative of California (RCRC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS (CAPA-IHSS), we are pleased to sponsor this important legislation and ask for your AYE vote to remove barriers to entry into civic leadership.

We and the above organizations write to express our strong support for AB 817.

- This measure would remove barriers to entry for appointed and elected office by allowing non-decision-making legislative bodies that do not have the ability to take final action to participate in two-way virtual teleconferencing without posting location.
- Local governments across the state have faced an ongoing challenge to recruit and retain members of the public on advisory bodies, boards, and commissions.

- Challenges associated with recruitment have been attributed to participation time commitments; time and location of meetings; physical limitation, conflicts with childcare, and work obligations.
- The COVID-19 global pandemic drove both hyper-awareness and concerns about the spread of infectious diseases, as well as removed barriers to local civic participation by allowing this same remote participation. This enabled individuals who could not otherwise accommodate the time, distance, or mandatory physical participation requirements to engage locally, providing access to leadership opportunities and providing communities with greater diversified input on critical community proposals.
- Existing law (Stats. 1991, Ch. 669) declares “a vast and largely untapped reservoir of talent exists among the citizenry of the State of California, and that rich and varied segments of this great human resource are, all too frequently, not aware of the many opportunities which exist to participate in and serve on local regulatory and advisory boards, commissions, and committees.” Under the Local Appointments List, also known as Maddy’s Act, this information must be publicly noticed and published. **However, merely informing the public of the opportunity to engage is not enough: addressing barriers to entry to achieve diverse representation in leadership furthers the Legislature’s declared goals of equal access and equal opportunity.**
- Diversification in civic participation at all levels requires careful consideration of different protected characteristics as well as socio-economic status.
- The in-person requirement to participate in local governance bodies presents a disproportionate challenge for those with physical or economic limitations, including seniors, persons with disability, single parents and/or caretakers, economically marginalized groups, and those who live in rural areas and face prohibitive driving distances. Participation in local advisory bodies and appointed boards and commissions often serves as a pipeline to local elected office and opportunities for state and federal leadership positions.
- **AB 817 would help address these issues by providing a narrow exemption under the Ralph M. Brown Act for non-decision-making legislative bodies that do not take final action on any legislation, regulations, contracts, licenses, permits, or other entitlements, so that equity in opportunity to serve locally and representative diversity in leadership can be achieved.**

AB 817 IS WORKING WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE AND LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL TO ALIGN ITS PROVISIONS WITH ALL OF THE TELECONFERENCING PROVISIONS THAT APPLY TO ADVISORY BODIES AS PASSED IN SB 544 (LAIRD) LAST YEAR, INCLUDING PROVIDING A PHYSICAL LOCATION FOR THE PUBLIC TO HEAR, SEE, AND PARTICIPATE FROM.

WE ASK FOR YOUR “AYE” VOTE ON AB 817 TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENTRY INTO CIVIC PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AND INCREASE REPRESENTATION ON IMPORTANT ADVISORY ONLY BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.