Governor Stitt Signs First Bill Of 2021 Legislative Session

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Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Governor Kevin Stitt today signed Senate Bill 1031 into law, his first bill of the 2021 legislative session, reinstating temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Act allowing for virtual public meetings.

"I want to thank Pro Tem Treat, Speaker McCall and the Legislature for getting this across the finish line to my desk," said Gov. Stitt. **"We've all heard from constituents, state agencies, local school boards and other public bodies requesting this, and I'm pleased we were able to deliver so quickly."**

SB 1031, authored by Senate President Pro Tem Greg Treat (R-Oklahoma City) and House Majority Floor Leader Jon Echols (R-Oklahoma City), reinstates the same exemptions to the Open Meeting Act that were signed into law in 2020 with some minor changes, including requiring public bodies to post documents or materials online that are provided to participants of the meeting.

"With the signing of this bill, public entities can continue to meet and do so safely until the pandemic is behind us and the people of Oklahoma maintain access to public meetings at all levels through virtual meetings," said Sen. Treat. **"The Senate fast-tracked this bill, and I appreciate Speaker McCall and the House for doing the same and getting this bill to the governor's desk early in the session. I am thankful for Governor Stitt signing this bill into law**

and that the first bill he signed into law this session is one that garnered huge bipartisan support."

The exemptions took effect upon the governor's signature and will remain in place until Feb. 15, 2022, or until 30 days after the COVID-19 state of emergency expires, whichever is earlier.

"This measure keeps government running even when board or commission members may need to quarantine," Rep. Echols said. **"The public will still have access to these meetings and the materials presented in them. This ensures openness and transparency and allows our state to continually move forward even during these trying times. If we discover any kind of problem in this process, the Legislature will be able to address it."**

During a signing ceremony at the Capitol, the governor expressed support for potential future legislation to permanently modify some sections of the Open Meeting Act to increase citizen participation in government.

"We've seen how virtual meetings has led to more Oklahomans engaging with the people who represent them," said Gov. Stitt. **"We always want to attract the best people to serve in state government and I believe we can innovate and make it more appealing to serve on state boards and commissions regardless where you live in Oklahoma."**

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