

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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November 11, 2020

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President
Louisiana State Senate
Post Office Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Veto of Senate Bill 39 of the Second Extraordinary Session

Dear President Cortez:

Please be advised that I have vetoed Senate Bill 39 of the Second Extraordinary Session.

This bill was intended to provide for the Legislature to meet during a state of emergency via telephone or videoconference. It appears that this bill was intended to be the statutory companion for Senate Bill 40, a constitutional amendment to provide for continuity of government by allowing the Legislature to meet remotely. This constitutional amendment did not pass the Senate. Without this constitutional authority, this bill should not be signed into law.

In the three sessions held during 2020, the ability of the public to engage with the Legislature has been dramatically limited, to detrimental effect. This bill would potentially result in even less public participation in legislative proceedings. While there certainly is a need to have the Legislature meet to provide for the continuity of government during an emergency, such should only be considered after careful analysis and with the proper constitutional framework.

It does seem ironic that, mere days before sixty-five House members signed a petition which purports to terminate the COVID-19 public health emergency, all but five of the same members voted for this bill which, during such an emergency, allows legislators to participate in legislative proceedings via teleconference or videoconference from the safety of their homes if meeting in person would be "detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the public." The COVID-19 emergency does indeed continue to be "detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the public."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards".

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Honorable Clay Schexnayder
Speaker of the House of Representatives