
Summary of Brown Act Updates (Senate Bill 707)

Prepared by MTC Office of General Counsel 11/20/25

Background

The Brown Act is California’s open meetings law, generally requiring that all meetings of public bodies be open and accessible to all members of the public.¹ Originally passed in 1953, the Brown Act focused on ensuring in-person access to meetings. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, many local agencies have found a need to continue meet virtually through teleconferencing, which provides the benefits of allowing more body members and members of the public to participate even if they are unable to attend the meeting in person. Senate Bill (SB) 707, signed into law by the Governor on October 3, 2025, and going into effect on January 1, 2026, is the latest in a series of Brown Act reforms implemented in the past few years and updates the pandemic-era teleconferencing rules to allow greater remote participation, especially with regard to advisory bodies like the Policy Advisory Council and its successor body.

Short Summary of SB 707

SB 707 made several substantial changes to the Brown Act, as well as numerous minor changes to update the language to reflect modern technology and California’s increasingly diverse population. The major changes include:

- Consolidating the different teleconference requirements of the “just cause” and “personal emergency” exceptions (implemented through AB 2449) into a single rule applicable to all public bodies.²
- Establishing special teleconferencing rules for specific public bodies, including advisory or “subsidiary” bodies, which allows more members to participate remotely and reduces the burden on body members to appear in person for quorum purposes.³
- Enhancing the ability of bodies to address virtual disruptions to meetings in addition to in-person disruptions.⁴

¹ Gov. Code Section 54950, *et seq.*

² Gov. Code Section 54953.8.3 (newly added by SB 707).

³ Gov. Code Section 54953.8.6 (newly added by SB 707).

⁴ Gov. Code Section 54957.95 (amended by SB 707); Gov. Code Section 54957.96 (newly added by SB 707).

- Requiring all legislative bodies to adopt a policy regarding recessing and reconvening a meeting in the event of a technological outage.⁵
- Requiring certain cities, counties, and special districts to translate agenda materials into commonly spoken languages in their jurisdictions, as well as provide additional accommodations for language interpreters.⁶

Updates to general teleconferencing rules

SB 707 made some updates to the rules applying to all instances of teleconferencing:

- Any member participating remotely and the statute they are invoking to do so must be recorded in the meeting's minutes.⁷
- A member may remotely participating as a reasonable accommodation for a disability without identifying their location, posting an agenda, or opening their location to the public pursuant to the following rules:
 - They must use both audio and video (e.g., Zoom), or by only audio if a physical condition prevents them from appearing on camera;
 - They must announce whether anyone age 18 or older is present in the room with them; and
 - Their participation is counted as in-person participation for the purposes of determining a quorum.⁸
- Any time a member participates remotely other than by "anytime" teleconferencing⁹, they must state whether anyone age 18 or older is in the room with them.¹⁰
- If members of a body use more than one method for teleconferencing, the body may choose one such method to comply with regardless of whether others also apply.¹¹

⁵ Gov. Code Section 54953.4(b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ia) (newly added by SB 707).

⁶ Gov. Code Section 54953.4 (newly added by SB 707).

⁷ Gov. Code Section 54953.8(b)(7) (newly added by SB 707).

⁸ Gov. Code Section 54953(c) (newly added by SB 707).

⁹ Gov. Code Section 54953(b).

¹⁰ Gov. Code Section 54953.8(e) (newly added by SB 707).

¹¹ Gov. Code Section 54953.8(f) (newly added by SB 707).

Consolidated teleconferencing rules for “just cause” and “personal emergency”

Prior to SB 707, the Brown Act identified three ways for public body members to participate remotely by teleconference. “Anytime” teleconferencing includes essentially the same rules as teleconferencing prior to the pandemic – members may participate remotely if they identify their location, post the agenda at their location following the Brown Act’s timing rules for agendas, and open their location to public attendees.¹² SB 2449 added “just cause” and “personal emergency” methods, which allow a member to participate remotely without identifying and opening their location to the public, as long as certain stricter rules regarding quorum and use of teleconferencing technology are followed. SB 2449 also restricted the use of these two methods to a certain amount of times per calendar year.

SB 707 consolidates the AB 2449 methods into one method still referenced as “just cause.”¹³ A member may participate remotely without identifying their location, posting the agenda, and opening the location to the public if all of the following rules are followed:

1. The member publicly provides a brief explanation of the “just cause” for participating remotely (i.e., makes a brief statement at the start of the meeting);
 - a. “Just cause” consists of any of the following:
 - i. Childcare or other caregiving;
 - ii. Contagious illness;
 - iii. Other physical or mental condition or illness;
 - iv. Travel on official business for a public body or agency;
 - v. Immunocompromised family member;
 - vi. Physical or family emergency; and/or
 - vii. Military service obligations.
2. The member participates by both audio and video (e.g., Zoom); and
3. A quorum of members of the body participate in person from a single noticed location.

¹² Gov. Code Section 54953(b).

¹³ Gov. Code Section 54953.8.3 (newly added by SB 707).

Special teleconferencing rules for advisory (“subsidiary”) bodies

SB 707 adds a new section to the Brown Act specifically addressing teleconferencing for “subsidiary” bodies, such as advisory bodies.¹⁴ This section allows all members of the body to participate remotely without identifying their location, posting the agenda at their location, or opening their location to the public, and without having a quorum present in a single location, so long as the body follows the new general teleconferencing rules¹⁵ and the following additional rules:

1. The body must designate one physical meeting location for the public to attend (e.g., 375 Beale);
2. All remote members must be on video as well as audio, unless they have a physical or mental condition that prevents them from appearing on video; however, a member can also turn off video to correct a technical or similar issue (e.g., “unstable internet connection” warning) and must announce the reason; and
3. The subsidiary body’s governing body (i.e., MTC/ABAG) must make specific findings every 6 months supporting the use of teleconferencing, and the governing body must allow the subsidiary to present recommendations to it.

However, elected officials who also serve on the subsidiary body in their official capacity (i.e., appointed to serve due to their elected position) can only participate remotely by complying with the “anytime” teleconferencing requirements.

Enhanced ability to address disruptions

The Brown Act previously provided the chair or president of a legislative body with the ability to address disruptions of a meeting.¹⁶ However, the enforcement methods that the Brown Act provided were not useful for addressing disruptions caused by remote participants.

SB 707 explicitly authorizes the chair or president of a body to remove or limit the participation of anyone disrupting the meeting remotely (e.g., via Zoom).¹⁷

¹⁴ Gov. Code Section 54953.8.6 (newly added by SB 707).

¹⁵ Gov. Code Section 54953.8 (newly added by SB 707).

¹⁶ See Gov. Code Section 54957.95.

¹⁷ Gov. Code Section 54957.96 (newly added by SB 707).

Adopting a policy regarding technological disruptions

All legislative bodies must adopt a policy addressing the body's procedure for recessing and reconvening a meeting in the event that its audiovisual system goes down or there is an internet outage.¹⁸ Such policy must comply with specific provisions¹⁹, and it must be adopted through an individual item on the agenda not on the consent calendar.²⁰

Language translation and interpretation

SB 707 adds new provisions requiring certain cities, counties, and special districts to translate their agenda materials into commonly spoken languages within their jurisdiction.²¹ However, these requirements do not apply to MTC, ABAG, its other related agencies, or to its committees or advisory bodies.²²

¹⁸ Gov. Code Section 54953.4(b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ia) (newly added by SB 707).

¹⁹ Gov. Code Section 54953.4(b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ib)(Ib) (newly added by SB 707).

²⁰ Gov. Code Section 54953.4(b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ib)(Ic) (newly added by SB 707).

²¹ Gov. Code Section 54953.4(c) (newly added by SB 707).

²² See Gov. Code Section 54953.4(e)(2) (newly added by SB 707) [only applies to cities, counties, and special districts meeting specified population and employment thresholds; MTC and its related agencies are not cities, counties, or special districts].