



State of Delaware Delaware General Assembly

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General Assembly Announces Plans to Reconvene Legislative Session

House, Senate will conduct business through virtual session to meet constitutional obligations

DOVER – The leaders of the Delaware General Assembly announced plans Thursday to virtually reconvene the second half of the 150th legislative session, starting later this month.

Following extensive legal and logistical research, the General Assembly will implement a plan that allows the House and Senate to meet to their constitutional obligations efficiently and effectively, while also protecting the public, staff and legislators from the risk of spreading COVID-19.

“From the moment we first postponed session in March, legislative leaders said our priority was protecting the health of legislators, staff and the public. That priority has not changed,” said **House Speaker Pete Schwartzkopf**. “During this State of Emergency, we have worked with and through the governor’s office to implement many of the policies we normally would have passed through legislation.

“But we also have been working on how the General Assembly can resume session during this public health crisis. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as setting up a video conference call. We have to lay everything out carefully so that we are prepared and can function as normally as possible when we reconvene. We believe we have a responsible plan to share with the public.”

Until recently, Delaware law required the General Assembly to meet in person in Legislative Hall to conduct business. However, the Legislature amended the Delaware Constitution in 2018 to allow for session to take place in alternative locations during an emergency. Given the current circumstances, legislative leaders have determined that the best and safest way to meet is through a virtual session.

“Thankfully, we have the technology to hold this unprecedented session in a way that will protect the public’s health while also allowing the public to follow the proceedings in a way that’s very similar to how we conduct business at Legislative Hall,” said **Senate President Pro Tempore David McBride**. “Our main priority will be to ensure our state agencies can continue to provide

the vital services our residents depend on. That means passing a balanced budget that accounts for a sharp decline in revenue and the cost of protecting the health of our most vulnerable residents.”

Under the plan, legislative leaders issued a joint letter to all General Assembly members Thursday (attached to this release) outlining the process for the next meeting of the Legislature.

The presiding officer of each chamber will reconvene session later this month. Both chambers will livestream their respective proceedings via YouTube. A link to both sites will be posted on the General Assembly’s website, legis.delaware.gov, and the proceedings will be broadcast on each caucus’ Facebook page.

Because there currently are no formal rules in place to meet virtually, several procedural steps must be undertaken first.

Each chamber must introduce and pass a concurrent resolution to amend their rules in a way that will remove any impediments to conducting a virtual meeting, including requirements for the printing of legislation, physical signatures of sponsors on physical backers, and physical signatures for committee reports. The procedures will include a method to verify the identity of each legislator and ensure that they are able to participate in virtual session, as well as provide a means for the public to observe the proceedings.

Once the new rules have been adopted, each chamber will conduct business virtually with the public able to follow the proceedings online.

The House will reconvene on Tuesday, May 26, to introduce and pass the concurrent resolution. The Senate will meet on Wednesday, May 27, to pass the same House concurrent resolution and consider several gubernatorial nominations.

Additional virtual session days will be announced in the coming weeks for the General Assembly to meet its constitutional obligation to pass an operating budget by June 30. The meeting schedule for the Joint Finance Committee also will be announced at a future date.

During a normal session day, hundreds of people fill the building, with more than 1,700 coming in and out on June 30 last year. Therefore, Legislative Hall has been and will remain closed to the public during these proceedings.

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