

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 839
By: Bivins
State Affairs
3-13-97
As Filed

DIGEST

Currently, no state law authorizes a governmental body to hold a meeting by videoconference call. However, state boards and commissions are allowed to hold open or closed meetings via telephone conference call under certain circumstances. This bill allows a governmental body to hold a meeting via videoconference.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 839 allows a governmental body to hold a meeting via videoconference.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 551F, Government Code, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F. New heading: MEETINGS BY TELEPHONE CONFERENCE CALL
OR VIDEOCONFERENCE CALL

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 551F, Government Code, by adding Section 551.126, as follows:

Sec. 551.126. VIDEOCONFERENCE CALL. Provides that this chapter does not prohibit a governmental body from holding an open or closed meeting by videoconference call, except as otherwise provided by this section. Provides that a meeting held by videoconference call is subject to the notice requirements applicable to other meetings in addition to the notice requirement prescribed by this section. Requires the notice of a meeting to be held by videoconference call to specify as the location of the meeting, the location where meetings of the governmental body are usually held. Requires each part of the meeting held by videoconference call that is required to be open to the public to be visible and audible to the public at the location specified in the notice of the meeting. Requires the governmental body to make at least an audio recording of the meeting and to make the recording available to the public. Requires the location specified under Subsection (c) to have two-way audio and video communications with each participant in the meeting during the entire meeting. Requires the presiding officer to identify each member participating in the meeting, on convening the meeting.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 1997.
Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 4. Emergency clause.