



The Voice for Open Government in Colorado

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Speaker Alec Garnett
Senate President Leroy Garcia
House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar
Senate Majority Leader Stephen Fenberg
House Minority Leader Hugh McKean
Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert
Colorado State Capitol
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Speaker Garnett, President Garcia, Majority Leader Esgar, Majority Leader Fenberg, Minority Leader McKean and Minority Leader Holbert:

We, the undersigned organizations, want to thank you and other legislative leaders for taking steps during the fall 2020 special session to ensure public and journalist access to the legislative process at a time when many Coloradans do not feel safe appearing in person at the state Capitol. Adding a mechanism for remote testimony during committee hearings afforded interest groups and individual Coloradans all over the state essential opportunities to express their views on proposed legislation during the COVID-19 public health emergency, and we urge the General Assembly to continue offering remote testimony for every committee of reference during the 2021 session. Additionally, journalists appreciated the preservation of at least limited floor access to each chamber and we ask that this same access continue.

We also ask you to consider the following observations and recommendations regarding transparency and public/journalist access to the legislative process, both during the session and when lawmakers are not in session.

- Reporters have learned about “working groups” involving multiple legislators that met via Zoom or other conferencing platforms prior to the special session. Please be mindful of, and adhere to, the letter and spirit of the Colorado Open Meetings Law, which deems all meetings of two or more members of a state public body “open to the public at all times” when those meetings pertain to public business. We ask you to notify journalists and the public of such working-group meetings (including meetings that take place in person) and allow contemporaneous access to them. Posting recordings of these meetings on the General Assembly’s website also would ensure a transparent process.
- As you know, it was difficult at times for reporters and the public to hear and understand

remote testimony and remote participation by legislators during the special session and a recent Legislative Audit Committee meeting. Please do whatever is technically feasible to ensure that speakers can be understood and clearly identified by listeners.

- We encourage you to integrate video into the legislature’s system for online monitoring of committee hearings, like the Colorado Channel system for floor sessions, if doing so is feasible. A video feed would help broadcast new outlets adequately cover committee hearings and make it easier for everyone to clearly identify anyone speaking via the WebEx conferencing platform.
- Please archive recordings of committee hearings as quickly as possible.
- Please post written public testimony on the legislature’s website so that journalists and the public do not need to file Colorado Open Records Act requests to obtain copies.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Respectfully,

Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition
Colorado Capitol Press Association
Colorado Press Association
Colorado Broadcasters Association
Colorado News Collaborative
Society of Professional Journalists – Colorado Pro Chapter
Colorado Common Cause

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