

Re: Case #2020-0414

To the Honorable Court,

Because of Covid-19, the New Hampshire State House of Representatives and Senate have been attending to legislative business, including public hearings, committee meetings, executive sessions, and two sessions of the House at the Whittemore Center in Durham, NH, per the House Calendar, through the use of remote video conferencing and telecommunications. This has been accomplished with relatively rudimentary technology compared to what would be operational with adequate planning and forethought. There is every reason to expect that the capacity to do important legislative business through remote conferencing will only improve with experience and advances in technology.

To be prudent, the state must plan for a future with similar disruptive events that either partially or wholly hobble the Legislature's ability to meet physically in one place. The reality that Covid-19 has had such worldwide impact makes it easy to overlook the fact that it is the 4<sup>th</sup> pandemic since 1957. There is good reason to expect further widespread and disruptive infectious events in the world, easily brought to our state by international travel.

Disruptions might arise from other imaginable reasons that have nothing to do with an infectious organism. Our present record-setting drought and highly forested landscape, rife with overgrowth, heighten the possibility of widespread forest fires. At their worst, they could be as disruptive as Covid-19. We need to consider the future in these terms, as distressing as such scenarios might be. To insist that we cannot plan accordingly, because our original constitution did not specifically enumerate such issues, is short-sighted at least, and potentially endangering at worst.

Respectfully submitted,  
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