

New York Coalition For Open Government



**Advocating For Timely Access to Information
& Meaningful Citizen Participation**

30 Reasons to Add Live-Streaming to Public Meetings

Background

- Many public meetings are still **"In-Person Only – No Remote Participation Allowed."**
- **YouTube is free**, and any smartphone or smart device can live-stream.
- Many government meetings in New York are small, making live-streaming simple.
- **All 50 state legislatures now live-stream their public meetings.**

A growing number of states, including **Vermont, Massachusetts, and Indiana, now require live-streaming** of many public meetings.

Public Health & Safety

1. **Sick & Contagious** – Many people do not realize they are sick and contagious. Requiring them to attend in person risks spreading illness, which is dangerous and outdated. The more people in attendance, the greater the risk to everyone.
2. **Elderly** – Many elderly taxpayers are unable to safely travel to and attend meetings.
3. **Disabled or Unhealthy** – Many individuals are too unwell to travel and attend meetings.
4. **Immunocompromised** – At least 25% of Americans are either immunocompromised or have an immediate family member who is. For these individuals, attending in-person meetings poses a serious health risk.

Applicable Laws

5. **Negligence** – A person is negligent if they fail to act with the level of care a reasonable person would exercise in the same situation. Refusing taxpayer requests to live-stream may constitute negligence.
 6. **Climate Smart Communities Pledge** – To date, **416 local NY governments**, representing more than 9.5 million New Yorkers, have adopted the Climate Smart Communities pledge, which includes the goal of reducing gasoline consumption. Adding live-streaming to meetings is a simple and effective way to achieve this goal.
 7. **Municipal Ethics Rules** – These often require public employees to minimize taxpayer-funded travel reimbursement expenses whenever possible. Allowing remote participation saves public funds.
 8. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** – Passed in 1990, before the internet became widespread, the ADA has not yet been updated to require live-streaming of public meetings. However, legislation has been proposed to modernize the ADA and include this requirement.
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Social Factors

9. **Military Service Members** – Those stationed away from home have the right to participate and stay informed about their communities. Live-streaming is another way to **"Support Our Troops."**
10. **Employed Individuals** – Many people cannot easily take time off work to attend meetings.
11. **Caretakers** – Many individuals cannot leave children, elderly parents, sick family members, or disabled individuals unattended.
12. **Travelers** – Some people travel for work or personal reasons but still want to participate in public meetings.
13. **Snowbirds** – Many New Yorkers leave the state each winter but still want to engage with local government.
14. **Women's Safety Concerns** – Many women feel uncomfortable attending meetings at night, in distant locations, or alone. Recent surveys indicate that **90% of women** consider time and location factors as major considerations when making employment decisions.
15. **Economically Challenged Individuals** – Some people cannot afford the travel costs required to attend in-person meetings.
16. **Transportation Challenges** – Some individuals do not own vehicles or cannot drive due to legal, medical, or other restrictions.
17. **Avoiding Controversial Rules of Decorum** – Some in-person meetings impose arbitrary, discriminatory, or controversial **"rules of decorum"** on attendees, discouraging participation.

Social Factors cont.

18. **Improving News Coverage** – Live-streaming enhances journalists' ability to cover public meetings and inform citizens about government actions. At a time when local news is disappearing, **we should encourage and facilitate the important role of journalism in our democracy.**
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Economic Savings

19. **Reduced Personal Transportation Costs** – As of 2024, the **IRS calculates** the cost of operating a vehicle at **67 cents per mile.**
 20. **Substantial Public Funds Saved** – Live-streaming reduces **public employee travel expenses.**
 21. **Avoiding Childcare or Respite Care Costs** – Many parents and caregivers must pay for childcare or respite care to attend **in-person-only** meetings.
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Environmental Factors

22. **New York State is Large** – New York covers **over 54,000 square miles**, and many residents live hours away from public meeting locations. The longest drive in the state, from **Montauk Point to Niagara Falls**, is **547 miles and takes over nine hours by car.**
 23. **Mountainous Terrain** – With **over 3,800 named mountains** in New York, bad weather and nighttime travel can be hazardous.
 24. **Extreme Weather Events Are Increasing** – Intense rain, flooding, road washouts, ice storms, extreme heat, and other severe weather events are becoming more frequent.
 25. **Canadian Wildfire Smoke** – New York State **routinely** issues advisories urging people to stay indoors during dangerous wildfire smoke events. However, many public officials still refuse requests to live-stream meetings.
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Public Employment Benefits

26. **Public Employee Recruitment & Retention** – It is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain public employees. Since **remote work is now the #1 most desirable job type in the U.S.**, requiring live-streaming of public meetings can help **attract and retain talent.**
27. **Protecting Public Employees' Health** – Live-streaming reduces health risks for everyone, helping public employees remain healthy, serve longer, and reduce recruitment and training costs.

Community Branding

28. **Public Engagement** – Live-streaming **enhances civic engagement** by making government meetings more accessible.
29. **Improving Trust in Government** – **Public trust in government has declined.** Now, more than ever, transparency and open government are essential to rebuilding trust.
30. **Community Branding & Economic Development** –
 - New York municipalities spend **millions of taxpayer dollars** each year on tourism marketing, competing with other regions.
 - **Refusing to allow live-streaming makes a community appear outdated, disconnected, and unwelcoming to professionals, families, and businesses.**
 - Many rural areas are struggling to attract and retain **working-age residents.** The declining birth rate ("**Baby Bust**") makes this even more challenging.

Live-streaming public meetings is now an essential component of a modern, forward-thinking community.

Comments & Additions Welcome!

✉ Email us at: live-stream@nyopengov.org