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Support– SB 561 – Electric Cooperatives – Meetings - Alterations

Choptank Electric Cooperative asks for your support of SB 561, legislation that will provide the flexibility to use modern technology for meetings, protect our members during health emergencies like COVID-19 and ensure their continued participation in the activities of the Cooperative.

SB 561, offered by Senator Hershey, **authorizes annual and special meetings** of the members of an electric cooperative **to be conducted in person, virtually, or both**. Under current law, an annual or special meeting of the members of a cooperative must be held in person with a quorum of 50 members attending live and in person.

Until 2020, many of our members, Board of Directors and staff looked forward to the annual opportunity to socialize and review the business of the electric cooperative. They enjoyed a meal, visited with experts, and learned about operations over the previous year. Members who attended also received the results of our annual mail-in or electronic vote for the Board of Directors election.

Our annual meeting is held at the end of April. In 2020, the COVID gathering restrictions and concern over the health of members made that impossible. We delayed the meeting as long as we could under our bylaws - holding it in mid-August. We held our special meeting on Member Regulation at the same time. But, in order to provide the greatest amount of protection to members and staff, we held the meeting in the main arena at the Wicomico Youth and Civic Center, a space designed to hold thousands. We limited attendance to 220 and observed social distancing, mask wearing and all CDC recommendations. Because all members were unable to attend, we also broadcast the meeting live on Facebook. We found that members liked the opportunity to participate this way and urged us to continue to make this format available for future meetings.

SB 561 requires the notice of annual and special meetings to include time and place and instructions for attending virtually if that is an option. The bill repeals the requirement that the quorum be met in person, allowing virtual participants to count towards the quorum. The bill allows voting to occur in person, by mail, electronically, or by any other method provided in the bylaws. On behalf of 54,000 Choptank Electric Cooperative members, we urge a favorable report on SB 561.

Contact

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Members First. Every Day.