



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Virtual Meetings Act for State Bond Commission captures savings and increases public access**

**BATON ROUGE, LA** - According to State Treasurer John Schroder, increased public participation and savings to the state and various parishes and municipalities are two benefits that will continue to be realized thanks to the passage of House Bill 325, which has been signed by the governor and is now deemed Act 149. The Act allows the State Bond Commission to continue virtual meetings, which began in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We must carry forward the positives that we learn from bad circumstances,” said Schroder. “The ability to hold virtual meetings has allowed more people to attend the meetings and it saves money since there’s no need to pay for travel or fuel for commission members, counsel, or staff of the governmental entities that have matters before the commission.”

Rep. John Stefanski successfully carried the bill that will allow the Bond Commission to continue to serve as a virtual meetings pilot for other state boards and commissions. According to Schroder, who serves as chairman of the commission, the hope is that after the continued success of the virtual meetings, other state commissions, boards, councils, and task-forces will be able to follow suit.

“With approximately 7,000 individuals serving on statewide boards, allowing them to meet virtually will turn tremendous savings for the state and the governmental entities that bring business before them without sacrificing transparency of the process,” Schroder said. “Louisiana must do a better job of taking advantage of technology. It just makes sense.”

He added that in-person meetings usually draw the attendance of 75-80 citizens. Online meetings of the Bond Commission found upwards of 300 individuals logging on to watch.

The bill mandates that the Bond Commission allow for virtual public meetings once during each quarter of the year and that a physical anchor location is maintained to allow those who cannot participate virtually to physically attend.

“People have lost faith in government,” added Schroder. “This Act allows Louisianans to witness the financial process of projects across the state and in their own backyards. It’s an excellent first step toward restoring that faith.”