

**To: Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Tina Kotek, All Members of the Oregon House of Representatives, and All Members of the Oregon Senate**

The Oregon Legislative Assembly went into Special Session on June 24, 2020.

The Capitol building was locked so that citizens of Oregon could not come in. Those citizens have a very high interest in having access to our political leaders throughout the legislative process.

Article IV, Section 14 of the Oregon Constitution reads as follows:

“The deliberations of each house, of committees of each house or joint committees and of committees of the whole, shall be open. Each house shall adopt rules to implement the requirement of this section and the houses jointly shall adopt rules to implement the requirements of this section in any joint activity that the two houses may undertake.”

The current arrangements for the Legislative Assembly to carry out its business, by preventing committees from being physically open to the public, and by preventing the deliberations of the House and Senate from being physically open to the public, violate the spirit, if not the letter, of this constitutional provision.

Being able to engage in virtual observation is not the same as the opportunity to sit in the gallery and observe debates or to visit legislators and their staff. A video stream is not the same as the opportunity to sit in a committee session, and to sign up to testify.

I am also surprised to see that the House and the Senate have adopted procedures that prohibit any member from presenting any amendment or any bill. The rules require that all bills and all amendments must be presented by the Speaker of the House or the Senate President. This arrangement is not in keeping with representative democratic government.

You should not prevent committee members from improving legislation, in an open committee work session, via amendments.

You could avoid a Capitol lockdown by providing that visitors to the Capitol be checked in with a simple form as to symptoms. They could receive a temperature check. They could wear masks. This would accommodate reasonable safety concerns.

I urge you to change your process to return to open, public meetings and to allow legislators to participate in a meaningful fashion. Top-down controls and a locked-out public are unbecoming of our Legislative Assembly.

Sincerely,  
Kevin L. Mannix  
President  
Common Sense for Oregon