

Durbin, Portman, Introduce Bi-Partisan Resolution To Allow Remote Voting During National Emergencies

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) introduced a bipartisan resolution to amend the Standing Rules of the Senate to allow senators to vote remotely during a national crisis. During certain crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may advise against convening the full Senate in the Capitol. However, that should not prevent Congress from safely engaging in its constitutional responsibility to convene during a crisis, conduct its basic constitutional duties, and enact responsible legislation for the nation.

Specifically, if the Majority and Minority Leaders jointly determine a national crisis exists that makes it infeasible for the Senators to vote in person, the resolution allows Senators to securely vote remotely. Remote voting would then be allowed for up to 30 days. The Senate would have to vote to renew remote voting every 30 days.

“We live in an age where national emergencies, public health crises, and terrorism can threaten the ordinary course of Senate business. We need to bring voting in the Senate into the 21st century,” Durbin said.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the Senate must be able to convene and complete our constitutional duties for the people we represent, even if we can’t be in the Capitol. We’ve taken a positive step forward with the addition of remote hearings, and I’m proud to have led the first virtual hearing in May of 2020 when I chaired the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Now we must take the next step and allow for remote voting during national emergencies,” said Portman.