

Committee on Community Affairs

CS/CS/SB 224 — Citizen Volunteer Advisory Committees

by Rules Committee; Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee; and Senator Wright

The bill authorizes certain regional citizen volunteer advisory committees to conduct public meetings and workshops by means of communications media technology, as permitted by the Administrative Procedures Act. This authorization applies to volunteer citizen advisory committees created to provide technical expertise and support to the National Estuary Program whose membership is composed of representatives from four or more counties.

The National Estuary Program is a non-regulatory program, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to identify Estuaries of National Significance and support the development of comprehensive management plans to assure such estuaries maintain their ecological integrity. There are currently four recognized National Estuary Programs in Florida:

- Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Program.
- Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program.
- Sarasota National Estuary Program.
- Tampa Bay National Estuary Program.

Each National Estuary Program is governed by a body known as a National Estuary Program management conference, which may appoint advisory committees to advise the conference on various topics such as research, restoration, technical expertise, public involvement, and resource management. Some management conferences have entered into partnerships with special districts through interlocal agreements to serve as the advisory committee. Meetings of these advisory committees are open to the public.

Communications media technology is defined in law as the electronic transmission of printed matter, audio, full-motion video, freeze-frame video, compressed video, and digital video by any method available. The bill requires that the use of communications media technology at an advisory committee meeting or workshop must allow for all persons attending to audibly communicate as if the person is physically present. Additionally, the notice of the meeting or workshop must state whether communications media technology will be used and how an interested person may participate. An advisory committee member who participates in a meeting or workshop by means of communications media technology is deemed to be present at such meeting or workshop.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 112-0