A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the public utilities commission's primary purpose is to ensure that regulated companies efficiently and safely provide their customers with adequate and reliable services at just and reasonable rates, while providing regulated companies with a fair opportunity to earn a reasonable rate of return. However, the public utilities commission has several long and short term goals that reflect the commission's increased work complexity and program responsibilities, which go beyond the commission's traditional regulatory role, including in the area of energy regulation.

The legislature further finds that due to these increasing responsibilities, it is essential that all areas of the State are adequately represented in the commission. Enabling a person's island of residence to be used as a criterion when determining the person's qualification to serve as a commissioner will meet this need.

The legislature further finds that advancements in technology have enabled people to participate and work remotely,
without having to be physically present in the same location as their colleagues. Permitting the use of teleconference or videoconference technology for certain public hearings before the public utilities commission will enable commissioners to participate in public hearings in a convenient manner and be fully engaged.

The purpose of this Act is to:

(1) Allow a commissioner to attend by teleconference or videoconference a public hearing of the public utilities commission, except for a contested case hearing, held on the island of Oahu if the commissioner resides on an island other than Oahu;

(2) Allow a commissioner to attend by teleconference or videoconference if the commissioner resides on the island of Oahu a public hearing of the commission, except for a contested case hearing, held on an island other than Oahu;

(3) Enable a member of the commission who is a resident of a county other than the city and county of Honolulu to receive per diem compensation; and
(4) Enable a person's island of residence to be used as a criterion when determining the person's qualification to serve as a commissioner.

SECTION 2. Chapter 269, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§269- Hearing attendance by teleconference or video conference. (a) A commissioner may attend a public hearing of the public utilities commission by teleconference or videoconference to allow a commissioner residing on an island other than Oahu to attend a public hearing of the commission held on Oahu and a commissioner residing on the island of Oahu to attend a public hearing of the commission held on an island other than Oahu, by teleconference or videoconference; provided that commissioner participation by teleconference or videoconference shall not be permitted at contested case hearings.

(b) Each commissioner participating in a public hearing by teleconference or videoconference shall be considered present at the meeting for purposes of determining quorum and participating in all proceedings."
(c) A public hearing held by teleconference or videoconference:

(1) Need not have a quorum present at any one location;

and

(2) Is subject to the notice requirements under section 269-12.

(d) The notice of each teleconference or videoconference public hearing shall specify all physical locations from which the commissioners will participate."

SECTION 3. Section 269-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

"(a) There shall be a public utilities commission of three members, to be called commissioners, and who shall be appointed in the manner prescribed in section 26-34, except as otherwise provided in this section. All members shall be appointed for terms of six years each, except that the terms of the members first appointed shall be for two, four, and six years, respectively, as designated by the governor at the time of appointment. A member who is a resident of a county other than the city and county of Honolulu shall receive per diem compensation for the days on which actual service is rendered at
a rate of per day. The governor shall designate a member
to be chairperson of the commission. Each member shall hold
office until the member's successor is appointed and qualified.
Section 26-34 shall not apply insofar as it relates to the
number of terms and consecutive number of years a member can
serve on the commission; provided that no member shall serve
more than twelve consecutive years.

In appointing commissioners, the governor shall select
persons who have had experience in accounting, business,
engineering, government, finance, law, or other similar fields.
A person's island of residence may be used as a criterion when
determining the person's qualification to serve as a
commissioner. The commissioners shall devote full time to their
duties as members of the commission and no commissioner shall
hold any other public office or other employment during the
commissioner's term of office. No person owning any stock or
bonds of any public utility corporation, or having any interest
in, or deriving any remuneration from, any public utility shall
be appointed a commissioner."

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.
Report Title: 
Public Utilities Commission; Commissioners; Teleconference; Videoconference; Per Diem; Qualifications

Description:
Allows a commissioner to attend by teleconference or videoconference a public hearing of the public utilities commission, except for a contested case hearing, including allowing a commissioner who resides on an island other than Oahu to attend a public hearing of the commission held on Oahu and a commissioner residing on the island of Oahu to attend a public hearing of the commission held on an island other than Oahu. Enables a member of the commission who is a resident of a county other than the city and county of Honolulu to receive per diem compensation. Enables a person's island of residence to be used as a criterion when determining the person's qualification to serve as a commissioner. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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