

Speaker: NM may continue accepting online comment

BY DAN MCKAY / JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Thursday, April 1st, 2021 at 6:13pm



In this Feb. 16 file photo, House Speaker Brian Egolf, D-Santa Fe, talks during debate over the proposed Civil Rights Act in the House. (Eddie Moore/Albuquerque Journal)

SANTA FE — House Speaker Brian Egolf, D-Santa Fe, made it clear this year that he is interested in allowing online testimony for future legislative sessions.

Each chamber of the Legislature this year adopted rules designed to limit the spread of COVID-19, including a move to online committee hearings.

The building itself was closed to the public, so in-person testimony from attendees wasn't an option.

On the House side, committees invited the public to Zoom meetings, where the audience could participate in online polls and people could raise their virtual hand and testify for or against a bill.

The system drew mixed reviews from people who participated. Some thought it made testifying easier while others said it just wasn't the same as being there in person.

Egolf, for his part, repeatedly said he liked the idea of allowing people to testify from home. In particular, he said, it was valuable to offer an option that didn't require travel to the Capitol, where public testimony is usually accepted in packed committee rooms.