

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2105

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 24, 2014

Title: An act relating to promoting transparency in government by requiring public agencies with governing bodies to post agendas online in advance of meetings.

Brief Description: Promoting transparency in government by requiring public agencies with governing bodies to post their agendas online in advance of meetings.

Sponsors: House Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Representatives Hawkins, Bergquist, Buys, S. Hunt, Holy, Orwall, Ross, Reykdal, Hayes, Pollet, Kochmar, Hudgins, Magendanz, Moscoso, Vick, Riccelli, Klippert, Stonier, Nealey, Tarleton, Scott, Pike, Fagan, Fey, Seaquist, Chandler, Farrell, Haigh, Fitzgibbon, Sawyer, Moeller, Gregerson, Johnson, Haler, Appleton, Carlyle, Morrell, Goodman, Van De Wege and Freeman).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/14, 85-13.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/24/14 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Conway and McCoy.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) requires that all meetings of the governing body of a public agency be open to the public and all persons must be allowed to attend. For the purposes of OPMA, a public agency is defined broadly and includes, but is not limited to, any state board, commission, department, education institution, agency, local government, and special purposes district. A governing body is defined as a multi-member board, commission, committee, council, or other policy or rulemaking body of a public agency or any committee thereof that is acting on behalf of the public agency.

Public agencies must publicly identify the time and location of regular meetings, but are not required to provide agendas for regular meetings. OPMA requires that the agency provide at least 24 hours' written notice to the members of the governing body and media

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representatives who filed a written request for notices of special meetings. This notice must specify the time and place of the meeting and the business to be transacted at the meeting.

Summary of Bill: Public agencies with governing bodies must post meeting agendas online at least 24 hours in advance of each regular meeting. Any public agency that does not have a website or employs fewer than ten full-time equivalent employees is exempt from this requirement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a modest first step at updating OPMA to reflect our online society. There are good sideboards on this bill. OPMA only requires notice of meetings, but does not speak to posting agendas.

OTHER: There are concerns about a potential obligation or risk to agencies created by this bill, but this bill acknowledges the smaller local governments.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Hawkins, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Victoria Lincoln, Assn. of WA Cities.