

SUNSHINE HEADQUARTERS

“A government by secrecy benefits no one. It injures the people it seeks to serve; it damages its own integrity and operation. It breeds distrust, dampens the fervor of its citizens and mocks their loyalty.”

– Sen. Russell Long, Louisiana’s late senator
in support of the Freedom of Information Act.



TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT LOUISIANA’S SUNSHINE LAWS

- 1) All records and meetings of Louisiana public bodies are public, unless specifically exempted in law.
- 2) When there is a question about whether a record or meeting should be open to the public, the law should be interpreted in favor of openness.
- 3) A public meeting is a convening of a majority of a public body to deliberate, act or receive information on a matter over which the body has supervision, control, jurisdiction or advisory power.
- 4) A public body may meet behind closed doors in “executive session” only for reasons specified in law. Two-thirds of the members present must vote to go into executive session.
- 5) Public bodies must establish an annual calendar of regular meetings at the beginning of the year. At least 24 hours before any type of meeting including regular, special or rescheduled – the date, time, location and agenda must be posted.
- 6) Each public agency has a “custodian” in control of the agency’s records who receives and processes public record requests
- 7) A citizen may examine records at no charge.
- 8) A public agency may set reasonable fees for copies of records. State agency rates are set by the Commissioner of Administration. Otherwise, the law does not define what “reasonable rates” are, although courts have ruled some costs charged by public agencies were excessive.
- 9) The custodian must provide a written response to public records requests within three days. If the record is immediately available, it should be provided immediately to the requestor.
- 10) A person who has not received the public record requested or a written response within five days may begin legal proceedings in the district court where the custodian is located.

The Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) is an independent voice, offering solutions to critical public issues in Louisiana through accurate, objective research and focusing public attention on those solutions.

To receive additional information about PAR or other available publications, you may reach us at (225) 926-8414, email us at staff@parlouisiana.org or visit our webpage at www.parlouisiana.org