



TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT LOUISIANA'S SUNSHINE LAWS

"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.

- 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 fees" 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 five business 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 business days may begin legal proceedings in the district court where the custodian is located.

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