

HB 316 -- Open Meetings and Records Law

Sponsor: Jones (89)

This bill changes the laws regarding the Open Meetings and Records Law, commonly known as the Sunshine Law. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Requires all records of the Missouri Ethics Commission to be open records except for any investigative reports prepared by commission employees regarding complaints until a decision is rendered and any reports of complaints that the commission dismisses;
- (2) Requires all meetings of the commission to be open except those in which the commission discusses a pending complaint;
- (3) Specifies that a "quasi-public governmental body" will include any association that receives public funding through dues paid by a public governmental body or its members;
- (4) Revises the definition of "public meeting" to include any gathering of newly elected members who haven't taken office, with or without current members, discussing public business which would be considered a quorum;
- (5) Specifies that only members of a public governmental body, their attorneys and staff assistants, and any necessary witnesses will be permitted in any closed meeting of the governmental body;
- (6) Requires a court to order the reimbursement of reasonable costs and attorney fees to the party successfully seeking disclosure of information contained in an investigative report compiled by a law enforcement agency that would otherwise be closed to inspection. Currently, reimbursement is at the court's discretion; and
- (7) Requires any public meeting of a public governmental body addressing issues regarding a fee or tax increase, eminent domain, zoning, transportation development districts, or tax increment financing to give at least five days' notice prior to the meeting, exclusive of weekends and holidays when the facility is closed. The meetings must allow time for public comment. If proper notice is not given, discussion on the issue will be postponed and no vote will be taken for at least 30 days.