

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5667

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 5, 2003

Title: An act relating to clarifying elected officials' access to open public meetings.

Brief Description: Clarifying elected officials' access to open public meetings.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Rasmussen and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/5/03 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; Horn, McCaslin and Reardon.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The Open Public Meetings Act requires that all persons be permitted to attend all meetings held by state and local governmental entities when they are transacting official business.

Summary of Bill: The Open Public Meetings Act is clarified. Elected officials must be given the same opportunity to testify that is afforded to the public at an open public meeting.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: An elected official should not have to relinquish his or her right to free speech. This is an issue of equal, not extra, access to government. The bill requires only that elected officials receive the same opportunity to speak that any other member of the public is given at any open public meeting.

Testimony Against: The way meetings are run results in elected officials being given preferential treatment. They get to speak first and this either leads to marathon meetings lasting, at times, to 2:00 a.m. or to the meeting being continued to another and then another day. People cannot afford to take this much time from work or home with no assurance of getting heard.

Testified: Senator Pam Roach (pro); Michael Kepche (con).