

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1552

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to public access at open public meetings.

Brief Description: Regarding public access at open public meetings.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Blake, Short, Nelson, Smith, Upthegrove and McCune).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/09, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/26/09 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, McDermott, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: A rule or regulation is a written policy or procedure by a state agency that is generally applicable to a group of people, industries, activities, or circumstances. Rules are adopted by an agency through a process mandated by the Washington Administrative Procedures Act (APA). The APA sets out exactly what steps an agency must follow to adopt rules. When an agency believes it has developed a final rule proposal, it publishes a notice of proposed rule-making and schedules a public hearing. At the public hearing, interested parties can make comments about the proposal. Written comments can also be submitted.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): During a rule-making hearing, all interested parties must have the opportunity to comment individually. All comments by all persons must be made in the presence and hearing of other hearing attendees. Written or electronic submissions may be accepted and included in the record.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: Several agencies have been employing a method to get public input on rulemaking that does not provide a meaningful exchange for the public. The public must be guaranteed an opportunity to speak and be heard at public hearings. This bill allows for a person to engage in a meaningful dialogue with agency representatives.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kretz, prime sponsor.