

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION--OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The Open Public Meetings Act (CH 42.30 RCW) is based on the concept that the public's business must be conducted in the open. Meetings of public government bodies must be open to the public, although not necessarily for public comment or debate. Except for the courts and the legislature, meetings of all governing bodies of state and local agencies and their subagencies are subject to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. "Governing bodies" include a committee of a council or other governing body "when the committee acts on behalf of the governing body, conducts hearings or takes testimony or public comment" (RCW 42.30.020 as amended by Ch 155, Laws of 1983). Ordinances, rules, resolutions, regulations, orders, or directives adopted in violation of the Act are invalid. A member of the governing body who knowingly participates in violating the act is subject to a civil penalty. Failure to comply with the Open Public Meetings Act may also result in removal from office.

### Closed Sessions

In general, executive (closed) sessions may be held only to consider matters affecting national security, site selection or acquisition, complaints, charges or qualifications of certain personnel, and pending or potential litigation. Final action on matters considered in executive session must be made in a meeting open to the public.