

Drainage Districts Need to Select a FOI Officer, New rules Apply

Attorney General Lisa Madigan believes that an open, honest and accountable government, the cornerstone of a democracy, can be achieved only through the free and open exchange of information between government and the public. In Illinois, our most important transparency laws – the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Open Meetings Act (OMA) – endeavor to open the workings of government to the public, shed light on government actions and, in the process, strengthen our democracy.

In 2009, Attorney General Madigan worked with legislators and open government advocates to draft and pass landmark legislation (Senate Bill 189, Public Act 096-0542) to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act to increase the transparency and accountability of governments at all levels. This new law went into effect on January 1, 2010 and provides new tools and provisions to make certain the public has timely access to public records and public meetings.

The new law makes it easier to enforce FOIA and OMA and fight for open and accountable government by making permanent the Public Access Counselor position within the Attorney General's Office and empowering the Public Access Counselor with the authority to resolve FOIA and OMA disputes.

Open Meetings Act Designees

As of January 1, 2010, the Open Meetings Act (OMA) requires that all public bodies designate employees, officers or members to receive training on compliance with this law. This change to the Open Meetings Act includes Drainage and Levee Districts. Each public body must submit the list of designated persons to the Public Access Counselor. Public bodies may submit this information by U.S. Mail or e-mail to:

Cara Smith
Public Access Counselor
Office of the Attorney General
500 S. 2nd Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706
E-mail: publicaccess@atg.state.il.us

OMA Electronic Training

All OMA Designees must complete the on-line training by June 30, 2010. After that, OMA Designees must successfully complete the electronic training on an annual basis. When a public body designates an additional employee, officer or member to receive this training, that person must successfully complete the electronic training within 30 days after that designation.

The Public Access Counselor's Office is currently finalizing the electronic training program. This training will be available for free at this Web site starting on February 1, 2010, <http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/>.