

Letter to the Editor
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**VERBATIM RECORD RULE WILL HELP CITIZENS
ENFORCE OPEN MEETINGS ACT**

The verbatim record rule recently passed by the General Assembly is an essential citizen tool to ensure public body compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Frequently disregarded, this amendment to the Open Meetings Act would require a verbatim record of all closed meetings by either audio or video recording, which must be maintained by the public body for at least a year and a half. If signed by the governor, this will provide citizens with a mechanism to ensure public bodies do not inappropriately close meetings to talk about public matters or go beyond the scope of what is permitted to be discussed in closed session. For citizens who suspect an Open Meetings Act violation and file a complaint, a judge will have the authority to review the recording in private and determine if a violation took place. Major hurdles to Open Meetings Act enforcement may be nullified: citizens will no longer have to rely on public officials who were present when the violation occurred to divulge the act and public body attorneys who neglect to advise against the inappropriate discussions will have greater accountability.