

SUBJECT: Appraisal district meetings subject to open meetings requirements

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Oliveira, McCall, Bonnen, Craddick, Y. Davis, Hilbert, Keffer, T. King, Ramsay

0 nays

2 absent — Heflin, Sadler

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, Local and Uncontested Calendar, April 15 — 30-0

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: The Open Meetings Act (Government Code, chapter 551) requires that every regular, special, or called meeting of a governmental body must be open to the public. Openness requires a record of the meeting and notice.

DIGEST: SB 1642 would require appraisal review board meetings for education, orientation, or training of board members in appraisal district or board operations to be open to the public. The board would have to post notice of such meetings in the time and manner required by the Open Meetings Act and would have to allow a reasonable amount of time for public input during the meeting.

This requirement would not apply to training and educational courses supervised by the comptroller, in which appraisal review board members are taught the contents of the current Appraisal Review Board Manual.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Each county appraisal district has an appraisal review board that hears property taxpayers' protests of district appraisals. It is important that the review board remain impartial in these disputes between taxpayers and appraisal districts.

Each time new members are appointed to the review board, they must go through orientation and training conducted by the appraisal district. Current law is unclear about whether orientation or training meetings held by appraisal districts for appraisal review board members are subject to the open meetings law. SB 1642 would specify that those orientation and training sessions must comply with the open meetings law. This would help assure taxpayers that the appraisal review board would remain impartial and that the district could not exercise undue influence.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.