

# Boards and Commissions Membership Handbook

ROLE OF A BOARD MEMBER AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE

LAWS AFFECTING BOARD ACTIVITIES

BOARD TRANSACTIONS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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### **Message from the Governor**

Congratulations on your appointment! Thank you for your willingness to serve the people of Washington state. As Governor, I am committed to increasing our citizens' faith in government. Our state needs public servants who share my vision of open and accountable government. Your service on a board or commission is a tremendous opportunity to influence the decisions and actions taken by our government.

Your gubernatorial appointment carries a great deal of responsibility. You will be expected to maintain the highest level of ethical standards and avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest. Your preparation for and regular attendance of meetings are vital to the success of your term. Your level of participation will directly correlate to the satisfaction you derive from your experience.

As you put your time and considerable talents to work, it is critical that you keep the public interest in mind. You are not only a representative; you are an ambassador to your community.

Again, I deeply appreciate your commitment to public service and improving the quality of life in Washington. I know you will do a great job!

Sincerely,

Jay Inslee



# THE ROLE OF A BOARD MEMBER AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE

## Citizen Participation through Boards and Commissions

Washington's system of boards and commissions is fundamental to encouraging the use of citizen talent and interest in affairs of the state, keeping government innovative and responsive, and improving the performance of state agencies and institutions.

Our citizens have enjoyed a long tradition of participation in state government. Through representation on boards and commissions, Washington residents are offered an important avenue to help create effective and equitable policies. Citizen involvement contributes to the success of government and the quality of life enjoyed by our families and communities.

Citizen participation works at all levels of state government. It encompasses a broad range of issues, such as education, the environment and natural resources, general government, social services, economic development and transportation. Some boards appointed by the Governor shape policy for major state agencies and departments, others prepare regulations governing program areas, and some serve solely in an advisory capacity.

In selecting members, the Governor strives to create geographic, gender and ethnic diversity. This helps ensure that decisions reached and services rendered more adequately reflect the populations being served.

## Types of Boards and Commissions

Boards and commissions are created by state laws and rules, executive orders, and federal laws and regulations.

Each board is unique in its purpose, mission and role. It is especially important that members be familiar with their board's governing statutes or other authorizing directives so they understand the framework within which the board must operate. Copies of your board's governing statutes or authority may be obtained from your staff employees. The three main types of boards are:

**Advisory Boards.** These may be created by the Governor, Legislature, individual agencies or existing boards. The members serve as advisers on policy matters to the appointing authority responsible for administering policy. Advisory boards may study policy and make recommendations for changes or implementation. Advisory boards do not have authority to enforce policy or create rules, but their analysis and recommendations can play an important role in furthering the effective operation of state government.

**Policy-Making Boards.** These boards generally receive their authority by statute. Policies are created through careful analysis and interpretation of legislative intent, as set forth in law. Policy-making boards often serve as governing boards for an agency. The boards may be responsible for directing the agency, approving budgets, creating and implementing agency policy, or appointing the agency director. Members of these boards have final decision-making authority.

**Regulatory Boards.** These boards may have some of the responsibilities of the advisory and policy boards, depending on the statute or order under which they were created. Usually, these boards are created by the Legislature, and perform rule-making or quasi-judicial functions. In fulfilling these functions, the board may operate as a legislative body or as a review and appeals body. As an appeals body, regulatory boards hear individual cases and issue rulings; board decisions, however, are subject to judicial appeal.

Some regulatory boards have the responsibility to determine the competence of members of a professional or occupational group. Such boards examine and license members of occupations to practice in the state, and take disciplinary or corrective actions, such as revoking or suspending licenses.

### **The Advisory Role**

Members of advisory bodies provide an important link among the public and agencies, the Legislature and the Governor. The information that members provide about community needs and opinions can have a profound effect on state policies and lead to better service. Advisory board members play a very special role in creating recommendations on important societal and governmental issues.

If you are appointed as a member of an advisory board, you will be expected to:

- » Interpret community opinions, attitudes and needs to agencies, the Legislature and the Governor.
- » Study programs and services, and analyze issues and needs.
- » Offer proposals and recommend changes in programs, policies and standards.
- » Provide the public with information and interpretation of department and state policies, programs and budgets.

Advisory boards support and counsel departmental and gubernatorial staff. They make important recommendations about policy. Most advisory boards, however, do not create or administer policy, programs or services, unless this power is granted to them by their governing statute.

When presenting recommendations to an agency, the Legislature or the Governor, it is essential that board members keep the following in mind:

- » Recommendations should be in written form.
- » Ideas should be expressed in clear and concise language.
- » Proposed solutions should be viable and cost-effective.
- » Recommendations should identify reasons for the changes suggested.
- » Advice should reflect the views of a consensus or a majority of board members.

### **About Policy Making**

As a board member, you are responsible for being knowledgeable about board policies and changes. Understanding the fundamental meaning and characteristics of policy is essential.

Policy is a written statement intended to be a guiding principle that defines an organization's intent and direction. It is most useful when set forth in broad terms so that it remains applicable and usable for a long period of time. It should not be so detailed that it dictates how, when or where things must be done. Policy should be stated clearly and concisely.

Policy may be amended, rewritten or abolished. Thus, policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains appropriate.

Board interpretative policy statements should be made available to the public in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act, RCW 34.05.230. This requirement is most applicable to regulatory boards.

### **Rule Making**

Most boards are granted authority by the Legislature to establish the rules and regulations necessary to implement their own statutory powers; however, a board may not pass rules which go beyond the scope of its statute.

A rule is any agency order, directive or regulation of general applicability, as defined in RCW 34.05.010 (15). It may set forth standards and expectations in general terms or may deal specifically with day-to-day objectives. A rule, rather than a policy, is adopted when the subject matter affects the public or another agency of government, or when the statute directs that a rule be adopted. Once adopted, a rule has the force of law, and all people or entities to whom the rule applies must adhere to it. Failure to adhere to the rule may subject a person to a penalty or administrative sanction.

**Legal Guidelines.** Because rules often affect the public, they must be adopted in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 34.05 RCW). In developing rules, board members should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- » The board must have statutory authority to adopt the rules, and may adopt only those rules supported by statute.
- » The board may not adopt a rule which conflicts with law or the state Constitution.
- » The board must comply with the Administrative Procedure Act on rule-making procedures.
- » The board's legal counsel from the Attorney General's Office should approve all proposed rules.
- » The board must give notice to the public on the intent to adopt the proposed rule, and hold a public hearing.
- » Rules must reflect a consensus or a majority of members of the board.
- » The board must take into account the economic impact of the proposed rule on consumers, businesses, industries and others who may be affected.

### **Being an Effective Board Member**

Despite the different sizes and types of Washington boards and commissions, it is imperative that board members recognize they are in a critical position to shape and influence board decisions and actions. It is important that each member keeps informed and up-to-date on issues, legislative activity and statutes affecting their board.

**Attendance.** Regular attendance is essential so that decisions will represent the opinions of the board as a whole. In addition, regular attendance enables board members to keep abreast of board concerns and helps ensure that issues are examined from a variety of perspectives. The bylaws of your board should define attendance requirements. A person may forfeit his or her position on the board as a result of poor attendance.

**Preparation.** Adequate preparation is another requisite for effective board membership. Your board's staff members will provide reports, proposals and other information to help you make informed decisions. Do not hesitate to request additional information you need to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions.

In a nutshell, effective board members:

- » Attend all board meetings.
- » Are well prepared for meetings.
- » Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority.
- » Recognize that the board must operate in an open and public manner.
- » Are knowledgeable about the legislative process and issues affecting the board.
- » Examine all available evidence before making a judgment.
- » Communicate well and participate in group discussions.
- » Are aware that authority to act is granted to the board as a whole, not to individual members.
- » Exhibit a willingness to work with the group in making decisions.
- » Recognize that compromise may be necessary to reach consensus.

- » Do not let personal feelings toward other board members or staff interfere with their judgment.

**Resignations.** If you are unable to complete your term, it is important to inform the Governor's Office and the appropriate staff from your board. A letter of resignation should be sent to the Governor indicating the date your resignation is effective and whether you are able to serve until a replacement is named.

### **Board Staff Members**

Some boards have employees dedicated to perform daily administrative tasks. However, there are a number of boards that work within a state agency or have access to advice from the agency, with no exclusively dedicated staff. In such cases, the agency usually provides support services. Board members must keep in mind that staff have other job responsibilities outside of their board duties.

**Staff Functions.** The primary function of the board staff is to carry out the rules, policies and programs developed by the board. In addition, staff members notify board members of pertinent issues and legislative activity. They may also arrange meetings, prepare meeting materials, compile background information and conduct research.

Board staff members also serve as a liaison to other boards and agencies, the Attorney General, the Legislature and the public. Staff members are a valuable resource to boards. A good staff member can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of a board. Board members should not hesitate to ask staff for reasonable help in carrying out their responsibilities.

### **Office of the Attorney General**

The state Attorney General is the state's chief legal officer and is elected for a term of four years. The Attorney General is responsible for providing a broad range of legal services to public officials and others.

**Legal Counsel.** The Attorney General serves as legal counsel to the Governor, members of the Legislature, state officials, and boards and commissions. The Attorney General advises and represents state agencies as they fulfill their official duties, issues legal opinions, and defends state officials and employees for actions performed in their official capacities and in good faith.

**When to Involve Your Assigned Counsel.** Each board and commission is assigned an Assistant Attorney General to provide valuable information and advice about statutes and legal issues. A board that follows the advice of its Assistant Attorney General is immune from liability and is far less likely to find itself involved in legal problems.

Board members may request the following services from their Assistant Attorney General:

- » Assurance that board decisions and actions fall within statutory authority.
- » Questions about conflict of interest.
- » Review of proposed regulations and revisions, and the drafting of such documents in legally correct language.
- » Evidence in support of complaints, and the cross-examination of witnesses in disciplinary hearings.
- » General legal advice about board actions and activities.

**Legal Fees.** The board should be aware that its budget will be charged for all advice and service rendered by the Office of the Attorney General. Agencies generally have budgeted funds for this purpose, but they are limited.



## **The Office of Financial Management**

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) was established to coordinate and integrate the biennial budget proposals of state agencies with the long-range, unified planning goals of the state. In addition, OFM advises the Governor and Legislature on matters of planning, management and policy. It also provides policy direction, and reviews business and management practices of state agencies and institutions. The director of OFM is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

**Policy Support.** The Governor's Executive Policy Office is one of several divisions within OFM. This unit works most closely with boards and commissions. It is composed of executive policy advisors who are responsible for advising the Governor on areas of state government such as education, transportation, social services, general government, the environment and natural resources, and economic development.

The Governor's Executive Policy Office reviews all legislation proposed by state agencies. The policy advisors then track the legislation and provide analyses. Policy advisors are very knowledgeable in their areas and an excellent resource if you require information on issues, legislation or statutes. They also can direct you to other resources both within and outside OFM.

## **The Office of State Human Resources**

The Office of State Human Resources (OSHRD) is a valuable resource that appointees should consult for guidance and training when dealing with hiring or other human resource issues. If your board has the responsibility of hiring the agency head, it is critical that all board members have a clear understanding of the state's hiring process and follow appropriate procedures.

**Recruitment/Hiring.** Because agency heads are exempt from state civil service laws, there is considerable latitude in the hiring process. OSHRD can assist the board in developing an appropriate recruitment strategy. Remember to communicate with the Governor's Office and keep the Governor's staff updated on the progress of recruitment and hiring efforts.

**Evaluation of Agency Head.** Once the decision to hire has been made, the board must make it clear to the agency head what is expected and how the board intends on measuring that person's success. Regular, periodic performance reviews of the agency head are crucial to determine how well the expectations of the board and the Governor are being met. The board should develop and agree upon the best method for conducting performance reviews of the agency head. This is another area where the board should use the expertise of OSHRD staff.

**Supervisory Responsibilities.** For the board and agency head to work successfully together, the role of the board versus that of the agency head must be clear. Who supervises the agency head? Who supervises other staff members? Clear understanding of these issues will help ensure a successful working relationship.

## **LAWS AFFECTING BOARD ACTIVITIES**

### **Restrictions and Requirements**

As a Governor's appointee, you must be aware of certain restrictions and requirements that may affect you during your tenure:

- » Board members must be familiar with and operate at all times within their board's governing statutes and bylaws, and state and federal laws.

- » To ensure accountability, all applicable policies and procedures adopted by the board should be in written form.
- » No board member may make unilateral decisions or take action without the consent of the board as a whole.
- » At professional or industry gatherings, or in other settings where appearance may be construed as representing the board, individual board members must use discretion to avoid the appearance of speaking for the board, unless specifically authorized to do so.
- » Board members must keep in mind that their mission is to serve the public, and that it is inappropriate to use board membership to create a personal platform.
- » Members are restricted by RCW 42.52.130, 140, 150 and 42.18.230 from accepting or soliciting anything of economic value as a gift, gratuity or favor if it is given only because the member holds a responsible position with the state.
- » Questions about board issues should be directed to the board's administrative or executive officer, who will see that all board members receive full information by the next regular meeting.
- » Details of board investigations, personnel files or business discussed at closed executive sessions should not be disclosed unless they are part of the public record.

### **Open Public Meetings Act**

The Open Public Meetings Act applies to nearly all boards and commissions. To determine whether the Act applies to your board, consult the Assistant Attorney General assigned to your board. Regardless of whether the Act applies, all boards should comply with open meeting requirements to the extent they can do so.

**Notification of Meetings.** The Open Public Meetings Act requires that all meetings of the governing body of a public agency, as well as some other meetings on policies affecting the public, be open to the public. In addition, the public must be notified of such meetings in a timely manner.

**Confidential Transactions.** Exceptions to the Open Public Meetings Act include confidential subjects such as personnel matters and real-estate transactions, which may be dealt with in executive sessions.

**Public Disclosure.** The minutes of all regular meetings must be recorded and made available for public inspection.

**Accessibility Requirements.** To afford members of the public who have disabilities an equal opportunity to participate, meetings subject to the Open Public Meetings Act are to be held in facilities which are wheelchair accessible. Public notices about such meetings must include a statement that sign language interpreters, materials in Braille, large print or tape, and other necessary auxiliary aids will be provided with advance notice. Notices should include the name and phone number of the individual responsible for coordinating such requests. Refer to RCW 42.30.010 and 42.30.900 for more information.

### **Reasonable Accommodation of Persons with Disabilities**

In addition to the Open Public Meetings Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets criteria for accessibility and accommodation. Under the ADA, people who have disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity for effective participation in the activities of boards and commissions, whether as appointed members or as members of the public.

**Accessible Locations and Communications.** Meetings and other board-sponsored activities should be held in wheelchair-accessible locations. Qualified sign language interpreters, materials in accessible formats such as Braille, large print and tape, and other forms of auxiliary aids for effective communications should be provided upon request.

Reasonable modifications should be made to policies or procedures, including travel reimbursement policies for members of boards, whenever such a policy or procedure creates a barrier to the full and equal participation of a person who has a disability.

As is true for all entities of Washington state government, boards and commissions are required to carry out five steps necessary to bring a public entity into compliance with the ADA. These steps are:

- » Designate a responsible employee or ADA coordinator to plan and coordinate the entity's compliance efforts.
- » Provide notice on a regular basis to employees, members, participants, other interested individuals and the public of the protections against discrimination on the basis of disability provided under the ADA.
- » Establish and publish grievance procedures for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of disability.
- » Conduct a self evaluation to identify policies or practices that do not comply with the requirements of the ADA, and modify those policies and practices to bring them into compliance.
- » Develop a transition plan that identifies any physical barriers that limit the accessibility of board programs, services or activities to people with disabilities; describes the methods and timetables for the elimination of those barriers; and designates the public official responsible for the implementing the plan.

A board that is administratively linked to a larger state entity may choose to incorporate its own ADA compliance activities into those of the host agency or institution.

### **Administrative Procedure Act**

The Administrative Procedure Act applies primarily to those boards involved in rule making and adjudicative actions. The Act provides that any orders, directives or agency policies or procedures that have general applicability to the public must be adopted as rules in accordance with Chapter 34.05 RCW. You should always consult with your Assistant Attorney General when preparing and adopting rules.

### **Executive Branch Ethics in Public Service**

The Ethics in Public Service Act places restrictions on the activities of those working with state agencies, boards, commissions or any other entity of state government.

Additionally, the Act provides that former state officers and employees may not benefit from or assist others regarding certain contracts or other decisions or transactions that they were involved in while in state service. State employees are prohibited from disclosing any confidential information acquired while in state service.

The Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction to enforce the ethics laws and rules, and to order payment of penalties and costs.

All board members should familiarize themselves with the Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW. The Assistant Attorney General assigned to your board can offer additional information.

### **Ethics and the Appearance of Fairness**

As a board member, you are expected to uphold a high ethical standard. It is extremely important that board members avoid conflicts of interest or even the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Using a public position for private gain is improper and illegal. Similarly, actions benefiting close relatives are prohibited. There are penalties for violations of state ethics statutes.

The following are examples of conflicts of interest:

- » Directing state contracts to a business in which you have a financial interest.
- » Using confidential information for private investments.
- » Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for certain regulatory rulings.
- » Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for making certain purchases.
- » Obtaining personal favors from employees.
- » Accepting favors for disclosure of confidential information.
- » Engaging in outside employment which assists non-governmental entities in their quests for state business.

Board members can avoid conflict of interest issues by being aware of and adhering to statutory restrictions, using good judgment, and being fair and equitable in decision-making. For additional information on provisions of the state ethics law, visit the Washington State Executive Ethics Board website at [www.ethics.wa.gov/](http://www.ethics.wa.gov/).

## **BOARD TRANSACTIONS**

Each board should have a set of bylaws to direct and clarify its actions, procedures and organization. Board members are expected to adhere to bylaws and all relevant statutes.

Bylaws are the guidelines by which a board functions. According to Robert's Rules of Order, bylaws define the primary characteristics of an organization, prescribe how it should function, and include rules that are so important that they may not be changed without prior notice to members and formal vote and agreement by a majority of members.

An organization's bylaws include a number of articles, such as the following:

- » Name of board
- » Mission statement
- » Membership
- » Officers
- » Meetings
- » Executive board (if needed)
- » Committees and subcommittees
- » Parliamentary procedure, often including the name of the manual of parliamentary procedure the board will follow
- » Amendment procedures for making changes in the bylaws

Bylaws should include expectations as well as guidelines for members. Issues such as attendance, responsibilities and discipline should be addressed in the bylaws.

### **Quorum**

A quorum is the number of members who must be present to conduct official business. If a quorum is not present, any business transaction is null and void. The quorum protects against unrepresentative actions by a small number of individuals.

The bylaws should specify the number of individuals who constitute a quorum and whether a majority of this quorum may take action. In some cases, the governing statutes will establish what the quorum will be.

The minimum number of officers who must be present to conduct business includes a presiding officer and a secretary or clerk. If these officers are members of the board (as they usually are), they are counted in determining whether there is a quorum.

At meetings where a quorum is not present, the only actions that may be legally taken are to fix a time for adjournment, adjourn, recess or take measures to obtain a quorum (such as contacting absent members).

### **Order of Business**

After the presiding officer has called the meeting to order, a board generally follows the order of business specified in its bylaws. If a board has not adopted an order of business, the procedure below is generally followed:

1. Reading and approving of minutes of previous meeting(s).
2. Reports of officers and standing (permanent) committees.
3. Reports of special (select or ad hoc) committees.
4. Special orders (matters previously assigned a special priority).
5. Unfinished business and general orders (matters introduced in previous meetings).
6. New business (matters initiated in present meeting).

### **The Chair and Voting**

If the chair is a member of the board, he or she may vote just as any other member. When not a member of the board, the chair may vote whenever his or her vote will affect the outcome; to break or cause a tie; or to block or cause attainment of a two-thirds majority when it is necessary.

A chair has only one vote, and may not vote as a member of the board and as a presiding officer.

Voting by secret ballot is prohibited by the open meetings law.

### **Public Disclosure**

State agencies and boards are required to have available for public inspection and copying their public records, such as procedural rules and statements of general policy, and other records, written or electronic, pertaining to the board's business. Exemptions to disclosure are limited and identified in statute.

Records relating to the conduct of official business are subject to disclosure even if they are on a personal computer.

For additional information on disclosure requirements and exemptions from disclosure, refer to Chapter 42.56 RCW or consult with your Assistant Attorney General.

### **Lobbying**

There exists a very fine line between advising and lobbying. It is important that board members be aware of this distinction. Board members are in a unique position that allows them to provide information and recommendations on issues.

However, a board member becomes a lobbyist when he or she attempts to influence the passage or defeat of any legislation by the Legislature, or the adoption or rejection of any rule, standard, rate or other legislative enactment or any state agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act, RCW 18.185.200, Chapter 34.05 RCW.

Lobbying also includes trying to influence the Governor's actions on legislation that has passed both houses.

**Quarterly Reporting.** Any public entity that undertakes lobbying must submit quarterly reports that consolidate all lobbying expenditures made or incurred by the entity's departments or divisions during the calendar quarter. Lobbying includes in-person contacts by agency lobbyists or liaisons with legislators to influence action or inaction on legislation, as well as in-person contacts with legislative staff. Boards must report all gifts, travel, contributions and entertainment expenditures for legislators and staffers alike, whether using public or nonpublic funds.

**What, When and Where.** All lobbying must be accomplished within the established channels of the Legislature, such as testifying at hearings, contacting legislators and staff, etc.

According to the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC), lobbying does not include any of the following activities for public agencies:

- » Agency requests for appropriations to OFM or requests by OFM to the Legislature for appropriations other than its own agency budget. (Once a budget request is before the Legislature, attempts to influence any portion of it does constitute reportable lobbying.)
- » Recommendations or reports to the Legislature in response to a legislative request, whether oral or written, expressly requesting or directing a specific study, recommendation or report on a particular subject.
- » Official reports, including recommendations submitted annually or biennially by a state agency as required by law.
- » Requests, recommendations or other communications between or within local or state agencies. However, attempts to influence the Governor with respect to signing or vetoing legislation are considered reportable lobbying. Other communications or negotiations with the Governor's Office would not be reportable.
- » Telephone conversations or preparation of written correspondence. Thus, only in-person contact, including testifying at hearings, is considered lobbying.
- » Preparation or adoption of policy positions within an agency or groups of agencies. However, once a position is adopted, further action to advocate it may constitute lobbying.
- » Attempts to influence federal or local legislation.

For details or additional information about lobbying, contact the PDC or your Assistant Attorney General.

**Prohibition on Elections or Ballot Measures Using Public Resources.** RCW 42.17.130 strictly forbids the use of public or agency facilities for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion or opposition to any ballot proposition unless they are activities which are a part of the normal and regular conduct of the office or agency.

### **Testifying at Hearings**

Board members often have an opportunity to testify at hearings conducted by legislative, local government or community committees. When providing testimony on behalf of the board, members should refrain from expressing personal opinions.

**Effective Testimony.** To provide effective testimony, members should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- » Testimony should be brief, concise and truthful.
- » Avoid reading lengthy written testimony; instead, orally highlight important points in the written report.
- » If others are offering similar testimony, try to coordinate information to avoid repetition.
- » Avoid being technical.



- » Be prepared to answer questions and comments by committee members. If you are unable to answer a question, offer to provide a written response later and always follow through.
- » If you must give a personal opinion, make sure that the committee understands that you are not speaking for the board, but for yourself.
- » Legislative staff members find it helpful to receive copies of written testimony prior to the hearing.

**When Testifying Becomes Lobbying.** Providing testimony is not a form of lobbying if it is done on behalf of the board and at the request of the committee. Testimony provided by individuals outside of board activities and for personal interest may be considered lobbying; therefore, the individual may have to register with the PDC. For applicability, contact the PDC or refer to Chapter 42.17 RCW.

Providing testimony may be deemed lobbying if a board member is visibly advocating an issue. Any contact with committee members or legislative employees after a hearing about testimony may be considered lobbying, and consequently must be reported under Chapter 42.17 RCW.

### **The News Media**

The news media has the important function of informing the public about state government operations. In doing so, it provides a valuable communications link with the community. It is important to maintain a truthful, cooperative and open relationship with the media without violating privacy or other citizen rights.

The following are suggested guidelines for working with the media:

- » Establish policies for media relations and designate staff people as media contacts.
- » Be as open as possible and keep your focus on the business of the board. Personal opinions, especially those of other people, are inappropriate. The news media is not the avenue to air dissatisfactions or carry on conflicts among board members or agency employees.
- » If you do not know the answer to a question or are unsure about an issue, refer the matter to a knowledgeable person in your agency or to the Governor's Office.
- » If you believe it is important that the public have specific information, please notify the Governor's communications director.
- » A "wise" board anticipates when an event in the community will stir the interest of the media. It provides materials that are responsive and informative, but which do not violate individual privacy or undermine the dignity and authority of the board. In such a case, inform the Governor's communications director prior to the release of any such information.
- » Be aware that the comments you make in public may also have to be repeated in a court of law. Do not risk your personal integrity or that of another by thoughtless or unwarranted remarks.

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