

## CHAPTER 70

**AN ACT** renaming the Open Public Meetings Act in honor of its sponsor, Senator Byron M. Baer, and amending and supplementing P.L.1975, c.231.

**BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

**WHEREAS,** It has long been recognized that openness in government promotes citizen participation in public affairs, increases public confidence in government, and makes public officials more accountable to the electorate; and

**WHEREAS,** The founders of our nation acknowledged the need for public access in the development of public policy, a concept expressed by James Madison who observed that popular government without popular information is “a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or perhaps both;” and

**WHEREAS,** Openness in the conduct of government affairs helps to prevent actual or perceived corruption because, as Woodrow Wilson stated, “corruption thrives in secret places and avoids public places;” and

**WHEREAS,** In keeping with this tradition, Senator Byron M. Baer sponsored the New Jersey “Open Public Meetings Act” in the mid-1970’s to guarantee the public’s right to attend meetings of public bodies at which public business is discussed or acted upon and to have adequate notice of these meetings; and

**WHEREAS,** In enacting this law, the Legislature declared that the right of the public to attend meetings of public bodies was “vital” to the democratic process and that “secrecy in public affairs undermines the faith of the public in government and the public’s effectiveness in fulfilling its role in a democratic society;” and

**WHEREAS,** Senator Baer has long been known as the “Father of the Open Public Meetings Act” because of his instrumental role in the enactment of this groundbreaking legislation which greatly enhanced public access to State and local government decision-making and which promoted a national trend toward making government-held information more available to the public; and

**WHEREAS,** By 1981, every other state and the federal government, in large part because of New Jersey’s example, had enacted similar laws intended to promote public confidence in government and the political process; and

**WHEREAS,** For his role in promoting greater openness in government, Senator Baer was recently inducted into the “State Open Government Hall of Fame;” and

**WHEREAS,** It is appropriate, therefore, to recognize Senator Baer by renaming the “Open Public Meetings Act” in his honor.

2. Section 1 of P.L.1975, c.231 (C.10:4-6) is amended to read as follows:

C.10:4-6 “Senator Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act.”

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Senator Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act.”

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved August 2, 2006.