

B-Engrossed
Senate Bill 106

Ordered by the Senate June 30
Including Senate Amendments dated April 14 and June 30

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SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure.

Creates Public Records Advocate and Public Records Advisory Council.

Directs Public Records Advocate to provide facilitated dispute resolution services to facilitate resolution of disputes between requesters of public records and state agencies or cities concerning disclosure of public records. Directs Public Records Advocate to provide training for state agencies and local government bodies on disclosure requirements and best practices for processing and responding to requests to inspect public records. Authorizes Public Records Advocate, upon request, to provide guidance and advice on public records processing and exemptions.

Directs Public Records Advisory Council to study issues that arise under the public records law and at least once each biennium to provide written recommendations to Governor and Legislative Assembly on effectiveness and fairness of public records law and public bodies' implementation of public records law requirements. Sunsets council on January 1, 2021.

Provides that Public Record Advocate's duties become operative January 1, 2018.

Declares emergency, effective on passage.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to public accountability in administering the public records law; creating new provisions;
3 amending ORS 36.238; and declaring an emergency.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1. (1) The office of the Public Records Advocate is created.**

6 **(2) The Public Records Advocate shall be appointed by the Governor from among a panel**
7 **of three qualified individuals nominated by the Public Records Advisory Council under sec-**
8 **tion 8 of this 2017 Act, and shall be confirmed by the Senate in the manner prescribed in ORS**
9 **171.562 and 171.565.**

10 **(3) The Public Records Advocate shall be a member in good standing of the Oregon State**
11 **Bar.**

12 **(4) The term of office of the Public Records Advocate shall be four years, except that the**
13 **advocate may be removed for cause by the Governor or upon motion of the Public Records**
14 **Advisory Council with the consent of the Governor. A determination to remove for cause**
15 **may be appealed as a contested case proceeding under ORS chapter 183.**

16 **(5) The advocate may be reappointed to consecutive terms.**

17 **(6) The Public Records Advocate is in the unclassified service.**

18 **(7) The Public Records Advocate may hire one or more deputy advocates or other pro-**
19 **fessional staff to assist in performing the duties assigned to the Public Records Advocate.**

20 **(8)(a) The State Archivist may furnish office facilities and provide administrative support**

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 to the Public Records Advocate.

2 (b) If the State Archivist declines to furnish office facilities and provide administrative
3 support to the Public Records Advocate, the Oregon Department of Administrative Services
4 shall furnish office facilities and provide administrative support to the advocate.

5 **SECTION 2.** (1)(a) The Public Records Advocate shall provide facilitated dispute resolu-
6 tion services when requested by a person described in subsection (2) of this section or by
7 a state agency under the conditions described in subsection (3) of this section.

8 (b) The Public Records Advocate may provide facilitated dispute resolution services when
9 requested by a person described in subsection (6) of this section and a city.

10 (2) A person may seek facilitated dispute resolution services under this section when
11 seeking to inspect or receive copies of public records from a state agency and the person:

12 (a) Has been denied access to all or a portion of the records being sought;

13 (b) Has been denied a fee waiver or reduction in fees after asserting under ORS 192.440
14 (5) that a fee waiver or reduction of fees is in the public interest; or

15 (c) Received a written fee estimate under ORS 192.440 (4) that the person believes exceeds
16 the actual cost to be incurred by the public body in producing the requested records.

17 (3)(a) A state agency may seek facilitated dispute resolution services under this section
18 if, in response to a request for public records, the agency asserts:

19 (A) That the records being sought are not public records;

20 (B) That the records being sought are exempt from mandatory disclosure; or

21 (C) That the agency is, under ORS 192.440, entitled to the fees the agency is seeking in
22 order to produce the records being requested.

23 (b) A person seeking to inspect or receive copies of public records may opt out of facili-
24 tated dispute resolution services being sought by a state agency by giving written notice of
25 the requester's election within five days of the requester's receipt of the agency's request
26 for facilitated dispute resolution. If written notice is given under this paragraph, the state
27 agency may not determine under subsection (4)(a) of this section that the person seeking to
28 inspect or receive copies of public records has failed to engage in good faith in the facilitated
29 dispute resolution process.

30 (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of ORS 192.410 to 192.505:

31 (a) The failure of a person seeking to inspect or receive copies of public records to engage
32 in good faith in the facilitated dispute resolution process described in this section upon being
33 authorized to do so under subsection (2) of this section shall be grounds for the state agency
34 to deny the request and refuse to disclose the requested records.

35 (b) The failure of a state agency to engage in good faith in the facilitated dispute resolu-
36 tion process described in this section after a public records requester seeks facilitated dis-
37 pute resolution services under subsection (2) of this section shall be grounds for the award
38 of costs and attorney fees to the public records requester for all costs and attorney fees in-
39 curred in pursuing the request after a good faith determination under subsection (5) of this
40 section.

41 (5)(a) Either party to the facilitated dispute resolution may request that the Public Re-
42 cords Advocate make a determination concerning whether a party is acting in good faith for
43 purposes of applying the remedies described in subsection (4) of this section.

44 (b) A determination by the advocate that a party failed to engage in good faith facilitated
45 dispute resolution and an award of costs and attorney fees are subject to review by the Cir-

1 cuit Court of Marion County as a proceeding under ORS 183.484.

2 (6) In the case of a person seeking to inspect or obtain copies of public records from a
3 city, either the person seeking records or the city may seek facilitated dispute resolution
4 services under this section, but only if both the person seeking records and the city agree
5 to have the Public Records Advocate facilitate resolution of the dispute and the advocate
6 consents to facilitated resolution of the dispute. A dispute described in this subsection is not
7 subject to subsections (4) and (5) of this section.

8 (7) Facilitated dispute resolution shall be requested by submitting a written request for
9 facilitated dispute resolution and such other information as may be required by the Public
10 Records Advocate. Facilitated dispute resolution between parties shall be conducted and
11 completed within 21 days following receipt by the advocate of the request for facilitated dis-
12 pute resolution. The facilitated dispute resolution period may be extended by unanimous
13 agreement among the public records requester, the public body and the advocate.

14 (8) If the facilitated dispute resolution results in an agreement between the public re-
15 cords requester and the state agency or city, the advocate shall prepare a written document
16 memorializing the agreement. The written agreement shall be executed by the public records
17 requester and an authorized representative of the state agency or city. The written agree-
18 ment shall control the resolution of the records request.

19 **SECTION 3.** Consistent with section 2 of this 2017 Act and rules adopted thereunder, the
20 Public Records Advocate possesses sole discretion over the conduct of facilitated dispute
21 resolution sessions.

22 **SECTION 4.** Written records, documents, notes or statements of any kind prepared for
23 or submitted to the Public Records Advocate, prepared by the advocate or exchanged be-
24 tween parties seeking a facilitated dispute resolution are subject to ORS 36.220 to 36.238. The
25 Public Records Advocate may claim any exemption from disclosure under ORS 192.410 to
26 192.505 that a public body that is a party to the facilitated dispute resolution may claim with
27 respect to a request for public records described in this section.

28 **SECTION 5.** (1) The Public Records Advocate shall provide training for state agencies and
29 local governments on the requirements and best practices for processing and responding to
30 public records requests.

31 (2) The Public Records Advocate shall perform training sessions throughout this state.

32 (3) Upon the written request of a state agency or local government, the Public Records
33 Advocate may provide guidance and advice on matters pertaining to public records request
34 processing and the disclosure and applicability of exemptions from disclosure of public re-
35 cords.

36 (4) Guidance and advice provided pursuant to subsection (3) of this section is purely ad-
37 visory and must cease when the particular advice sought relates to a matter that is referred
38 to facilitated dispute resolution under section 2 of this 2017 Act.

39 **SECTION 6.** The Judicial Department is not subject to sections 2 and 5 of this 2017 Act.

40 **SECTION 7.** ORS 36.238 is amended to read:

41 36.238. The provisions of ORS 36.210 and 36.220 to 36.238 apply to:

42 (1) All mediations, whether conducted by a publicly funded program or by a private mediation
43 provider[.]; and

44 (2) Facilitated dispute resolution services conducted by the Public Records Advocate un-
45 der section 2 of this 2017 Act. Solely for purposes of ORS 36.210 and 36.220 to 36.238, a facil-

1 itated dispute resolution shall be deemed a mediation.

2 **SECTION 8. (1) The Public Records Advisory Council is created.**

3 **(2) The Public Records Advisory Council consists of:**

4 **(a) The Secretary of State or a designee of the Secretary of State;**

5 **(b) The Attorney General or a designee of the Attorney General;**

6 **(c) The Director of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services or a designee of**
7 **the director;**

8 **(d) A representative of the news media who is a member in good standing of a profes-**
9 **sional journalism association and who is appointed by the Governor;**

10 **(e) Two additional representatives of the news media who are appointed by the Governor;**

11 **(f) A representative of the cities of this state who is appointed by the Governor;**

12 **(g) A representative of the counties of this state who is appointed by the Governor;**

13 **(h) A representative of the special districts of this state who is appointed by the Gover-**
14 **nor;**

15 **(i) A representative of the public sector workforce who is appointed by the Governor;**

16 **(j) A member of the public who is appointed by the Governor;**

17 **(k) A Senator who is appointed by the President of the Senate and who serves as an ex**
18 **officio nonvoting member;**

19 **(L) A Representative who is appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives**
20 **and who serves as an ex officio nonvoting member; and**

21 **(m) Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, the Public Records Advocate,**
22 **who shall serve as chair of the council.**

23 **(3) At any time when the office of Public Records Advocate is vacant:**

24 **(a) The Secretary of State or a designee of the Secretary of State shall serve as the**
25 **acting chair of the Public Records Advisory Council;**

26 **(b) The council shall convene at the time and place designated by the acting chair but**
27 **within 30 days of the vacancy of the office of Public Records Advocate;**

28 **(c) The council shall take up only the question of the nomination of three qualified indi-**
29 **viduals for the Governor to consider for appointment under section 1 of this 2017 Act as**
30 **Public Records Advocate; and**

31 **(d) The individual who had vacated the office of Public Records Advocate may participate**
32 **in deliberations and vote on the slate of nominees unless the individual vacated the office for**
33 **reasons described in section 1 (4) of this 2017 Act.**

34 **(4) The appointment of a member of the council described in subsection (2)(d) to (j) of**
35 **this section is subject to confirmation by the Senate in the manner prescribed in ORS 171.562**
36 **and 171.565.**

37 **(5) A member of the council described in subsection (2)(d), (e) or (j) of this section is**
38 **entitled to compensation and expenses as provided in ORS 292.495.**

39 **(6) A majority of the members of the council constitutes a quorum for the transaction**
40 **of business.**

41 **(7) The council shall meet at least once every six months. The council also may meet**
42 **at other times and places specified by the call of the chair or of a majority of the members**
43 **of the council.**

44 **(8) All public bodies, as defined in ORS 192.410, shall assist the council in the performance**
45 **of its duties and, to the extent permitted by laws relating to confidentiality, furnish such**

1 information, including public records, and advice as the members of the council consider
2 necessary to perform their duties.

3 **SECTION 9.** Notwithstanding section 8 (3) of this 2017 Act, the acting chair of the Public
4 Records Advisory Council as determined under section 8 (3) of this 2017 Act shall convene
5 the council within 10 business days following the Senate confirmation of all members of the
6 council for the purpose of nominating individuals for the Governor to consider for appoint-
7 ment as Public Records Advocate under section 1 of this 2017 Act. The council shall take up
8 only the question of the nomination of qualified individuals for the office of Public Records
9 Advocate.

10 **SECTION 10.** (1) The Public Records Advisory Council created under section 8 of this 2017
11 Act shall periodically perform all of the following:

12 (a) Survey state agency and other public body practices and procedures for:

13 (A) Receiving public records requests, identifying the existence of records responsive to
14 the requests and gathering and disclosing responsive records;

15 (B) Determining fee estimates and imposing or waiving fees under ORS 192.440; and

16 (C) Determining and applying exemptions from required disclosure of public records.

17 (b) Examine practices similar to those described in paragraph (a) of this subsection in
18 other jurisdictions.

19 (c) Identify inefficiencies and inconsistencies in application of the public records law that
20 impede transparency in public process and government.

21 (d) Make recommendations on changes in law, policy or practice that could enhance
22 transparency in public process and government, and facilitate rapid dissemination of public
23 records to requesters.

24 (e) Make recommendations on the role of the Public Records Advocate as facilitator in
25 disputes between custodians of public records and public record requesters.

26 (2) No later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, the council shall submit to
27 the Governor, and to the Legislative Assembly in the manner provided by ORS 192.245, a
28 report that describes the findings of the council since the council's last report. The report
29 may include recommendations for legislation.

30 (3) The council or the Public Records Advocate may prepare reports and studies more
31 frequently than required under subsection (2) of this section.

32 (4) The council may adopt rules governing the operations of the office of the Public Re-
33 cords Advocate, including but not limited to rules establishing procedures for the conduct
34 of facilitated dispute resolution under section 2 of this 2017 Act. The council shall consider
35 efficiencies and the preference for a policy of transparency and openness in government in
36 this state in adopting rules under this subsection.

37 **NOTE:** Section 11 was deleted by amendment. Subsequent sections were not renumbered.

38 **SECTION 12.** Sections 1 to 6 of this 2017 Act are added to and made a part of ORS 192.410
39 to 192.505.

40 **SECTION 13.** Sections 8, 10 and 11 of this 2017 Act are added to and made a part of ORS
41 chapter 192.

42 **SECTION 14.** Sections 2 to 6 of this 2017 Act and the amendments to ORS 36.238 by sec-
43 tion 7 of this 2017 Act become operative on January 1, 2018.

44 **SECTION 15.** Sections 8, 9 and 10 of this 2017 Act are repealed on January 1, 2021.

45 **SECTION 16.** Section 1 of this 2017 Act is amended to read:

1 **Sec. 1.** (1) The office of the Public Records Advocate is created.

2 (2) The Public Records Advocate shall be appointed by the Governor [*from among a panel of*
3 *three qualified individuals nominated by the Public Records Advisory Council under section 8 of this*
4 *2017 Act,*] and shall be confirmed by the Senate in the manner prescribed in ORS 171.562 and
5 171.565.

6 (3) The Public Records Advocate shall be a member in good standing of the Oregon State Bar.

7 (4) The term of office of the Public Records Advocate shall be four years, except that the ad-
8 vocate may be removed for cause by the Governor [*or upon motion of the Public Records Advisory*
9 *Council with the consent of the Governor*]. A determination to remove for cause may be appealed as
10 a contested case proceeding under ORS chapter 183.

11 (5) The advocate may be reappointed to consecutive terms.

12 (6) The Public Records Advocate is in the unclassified service.

13 (7) The Public Records Advocate may hire one or more deputy advocates or other professional
14 staff to assist in performing the duties assigned to the Public Records Advocate.

15 (8)(a) The State Archivist may furnish office facilities and provide administrative support to the
16 Public Records Advocate.

17 (b) If the State Archivist declines to furnish office facilities and provide administrative support
18 to the Public Records Advocate, the Oregon Department of Administrative Services shall furnish
19 office facilities and provide administrative support to the advocate.

20 **SECTION 17. The amendments to section 1 of this 2017 Act by section 16 of this 2017 Act**
21 **become operative on January 1, 2021.**

22 **SECTION 18. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appro-**
23 **priated to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services, for the biennium beginning**
24 **July 1, 2017, out of the General Fund, the amount of \$633,187, which may be expended for the**
25 **office of the Public Records Advocate and the support of the Public Records Advisory Coun-**
26 **cil.**

27 **SECTION 19. This 2017 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public**
28 **peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2017 Act takes effect**
29 **on its passage.**

30