

New law adds requirements on special meeting announcements

The Washington Legislature added some requirements for announcing special meetings. Individuals testifying at the legislative hearings voiced concerns over the public's lack of knowledge that local governments were holding special meetings. These changes are designed to increase notice to the public.

As applied to school districts, the law provides that a "special meeting" may be called by the board chair or presidents or at the request of a majority of the board members. Written notice stating the purpose of the meeting must be provided to each board member as well as to each local newspaper, radio or TV station that has requested, in writing, notice of such meetings. That notice must be provided at least 24 hours before the meeting. The bill, which went through a number of amendments, added the following requirements for notice:

- The notice must also be posted on the district's website unless:
 - The district doesn't have a webpage;
 - The district employs fewer than ten full-time equivalent employees; or
 - The district does not have an employee whose job description or employment contract provides a duty to maintain or update the website.
- The district must prominently display the notice at the main entrance of the district's headquarters as well as at the location of the meeting if the meeting is held at a location other than the headquarters.
- All required notices must be delivered or posted not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

This law, which applies to all public agencies, took effect June 7, 2012 and thus applies to all special meetings held on or after that date.

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