

Senate Bill No. 289 - Open Meetings

AN ACT concerning

Open Meetings of Public Bodies

FOR the purpose of requiring public bodies in exercising legislative, quasi-legislative, or advisory functions to hold open meetings, to give notice of their meetings and to keep minutes which are open to public inspection; allowing meetings of such public bodies to be closed for certain specified and other reasons; allowing minutes of closed meetings to remain secret; authorizing suits by private persons to enforce this subtitle; providing that this subtitle is to prevail over conflicting provisions of [[existing law]] other laws unless they are more stringent; and generally relating to the meetings of public bodies.

May 25, 1976.

Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
President of the Senate
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Dear Mr. President:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed Senate Bill 289.

This bill requires nearly all municipal, county, and State "public bodies" to hold open meetings unless the circumstances fall into one of the exemptions stated in the bill, and provides for the voiding of actions taken by these public bodies in the event of non-compliance. The governments of eighteen counties and Baltimore City have requested that it be vetoed.

I am aware that the bill was the subject of much discussion and debate in the Legislature, and has generally been represented as a mechanism to allow greater public participation in governmental decision-making. I want, therefore, to make clear at the outset that I have no quarrel whatever with the purpose and objective of the bill, and, from their letters, neither do the county governments. My sole concern is that, as worded, it will work against, rather than for, the public interest. My particular objections, which are set forth below, can, in my judgment, be corrected; and, as the bill would not become effective until July 1, 1977 in any event, these can be made in the next session of the Legislature without causing any delay in the