**ARKANSAS**

**Freedom of Information Act**

The Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is one of the most comprehensive and strongest open-records and open-meetings laws in the country.

The Attorney General partners with the [Arkansas Press Association](http://www.arkansaspress.org/?page=foihandbook) and other entities to publish a “[Freedom of Information Act Handbook](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.arkansaspress.org/resource/resmgr/files/FOIHandbook_18thEd.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)” after every regular session of the General Assembly. The handbook assists Arkansas residents and journalists in using the law and government entities in complying with it. Free copies are available from the Attorney General’s office by completing this [short form](http://arkansasag.gov/resources/presentation-requests/), emailing community@ArkansasAG.gov or calling 501-682-2007.

Attorney General Rutledge hosted FOIA webcasts in 2015, 2016 and 2017, along with workshops in West Memphis, Russellville, Conway, Hope and other communities.

To file a FOIA request:

https://arkansasag.gov/resources/presentation-requests/

The Arkansas Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA)

Act 93 of 1967

As amended by Act 1201 of 1976; Act 652 of 1977; Act

608 of 1981; Acts 468 and 843 of 1985; Acts 1001 and 49

of 1987; Act 8 of the 3rd Extr. Session of 1989; Act 895

of 1993; Acts 873 and 1335 of 1997; Acts 1093 and 1589

of 1999; Acts 1259, 1336, and 1653 of 2001; Acts 213,

275, 763, and 1214 of 2003, Acts 259, 1994 and 2003 of

2005; Acts 268, 726 and 998 of 2007; and Acts 184, 440,

631 and 1291 of 2009; Acts 99, 168, and 210 of 2011.

These acts are codified at Ark. Code Ann. §§ 25-19-101

through -110 (Repl. 2002 & Supp. 2011).

**25-19-101. Title.**

This chapter shall be known and cited as the “Freedom

of Information Act of 1967.”

**25-19-102. Legislative intent.**

It is vital in a democratic society that public business be

performed in an open and public manner so that the

electors shall be advised of the performance of public officials

and of the decisions that are reached in public activity and

in making public policy. Toward this end, this chapter is

adopted, making it possible for them or their representatives

 to learn and to report fully the activities of their public officials.

**25-19-103. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise

requires:

(1)

(A) “Custodian,” with respect to any public record,

means the person having administrative control of that

record.

(B) “Custodian” does not mean a person who holds

public records solely for the purposes of storage, safekeeping,

or data processing for others;

(2) “Format” means the organization, arrangement, and

form of electronic information for use, viewing, or storage;

(3) “Medium” means the physical form or material on

which records and information may be stored or represented

and may include, but is not limited to, paper, microfilm,

microform, computer disks and diskettes, optical disks, and

magnetic tapes;

(4) “Public meetings” means the meetings of any

bureau, commission, or agency of the state or any political

subdivision of the state, including municipalities and counties

boards of education, and all other boards, bureaus,

commissions, or organizations in the State of Arkansas,

except grand juries, supported wholly or in part by public

funds or expending public funds; and

 (A) “Public records” means writings, recorded

sounds, films, tapes, electronic or computer based information,

or data compilations in any medium, required by law

to be kept or otherwise kept, and that constitute a record of

the performance or lack of performance of official functions

that are or should be carried out by a public official or

employee, a governmental agency, or any other agency or

improvement district that is wholly or partially supported

by public funds or expending public funds. All records

maintained in public offices or by public employees within

the scope of their employment shall be presumed to be public records.

(B) “Public records” does not mean software acquired by purchase, lease, or license.

(6)

(A) “Public water system” means all facilities composing a system for the collection, treatment, and delivery of drinking water to the general public, including, but notlimited to, reservoirs, pipelines, reclamation facilities, processing facilities, and distribution facilities.

(B) This subdivision (6) shall expire on July 1, 2011;

and

(7) Vulnerability assessment” means an assessment of

the vulnerability of a public water system to a terrorist

attack or other intentional acts intended to substantially disrupt the ability of the public water system to provide a safe and reliable supply of drinking water as required by thePublic Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-188.

**25-19-104. Penalty.**

Any person who negligently violates any of the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor.

25-19-105. Examination and copying of public records.

(a)(1)(A) Except as otherwise specifically provided by

this section or by laws specifically enacted to provide otherwise, all public records shall be open to inspection and copying by any citizen of the State of Arkansas during the

regular business hours of the custodian of the records.

(B) However, access to inspect and copy public

records shall be denied to:

(i) A person who, at the time of the request, has pleaded guilty to or been found guilty of a felony and is incarcerated in a correctional facility; and

(ii) The representative of a person under

subdivision (a)(1)(B)(i) of this section unless the representative is the person's attorney who is requesting information that is subject to disclosure under this section.

(2)

(A) A citizen may make a request to the custodian

to inspect, copy, or receive copies of public records.

(B)

The request may be made in person, by telephone, by mail, by facsimile transmission, by electronic mail, or by other electronic means provided by the

custodian.

(C) The request shall be sufficiently specific to

enable the custodian to locate the records with reasonable

effort.

(3) If the person to whom the request is directed is not

the custodian of the records, the person shall so notify the

requester and identify the custodian, if known to or readily

ascertainable by the person.

Exemptions:

(b) It is the specific intent of this section that the following

shall not be deemed to be made open to the public under the

provisions of this chapter:

(1) State income tax records;

(2) Medical records, adoption records, and education

records as defined in the Family Educational Rights and

Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, unless their disclosure is

consistent with the provisions of that act;

(3) The site files and records maintained by the

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program of the Department

of Arkansas Heritage and the Arkansas Archeological

Survey;

(4) Grand jury minutes;

(5) Unpublished drafts of judicial or quasi-judicial

opinions and decisions;

(6) Undisclosed investigations by law enforcement

agencies of suspected criminal activity;

(7) Unpublished memoranda, working papers, and

correspondence of the Governor, members of the General

Assembly, Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals

Judges, and the Attorney General;

(8) Documents that are protected from disclosure by

order or rule of court;

(9)

(A) Files that, if disclosed would give advantage

to competitors or bidders and records maintained by the

Arkansas Economic Development Commission related to

any business entity’s planning, site location, expansion,

operations, or product development and marketing, unless

approval for release of such records is granted by the business entity.

(B) However, this exemption shall not be applicable to any records of expenditures or grants made or administered by the commission and otherwise disclosable under the provisions of this chapter;

(10)(A) The identities of law enforcement officers

currently working undercover with their agencies and identified in the Arkansas Minimum Standards Office as undercover officers;

(B) Records of the number of undercover officers

and agency lists are not exempt from this chapter;

(11) Records containing measures, procedures,

instructions, or related data used to cause a computer or a

computer system or network, including telecommunication networks or applications thereon, to perform security functions, including, but not limited to, passwords, personal identification numbers, transaction authorization mechanisms, and other means of preventing access to computers, computer systems or networks, or any data residing therein;

(12) Personnel records to the extent that disclosure

would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(13) Home addresses of nonelected state employees, nonelected municipal employees, and nonelected county employees contained in employer records, except that the custodian of the records shall verify an employee’s city or

county of residence or address on record upon request;

(14) Materials, information, examinations, and answers to examinations utilized by boards and commissions for purposes of testing applicants for licensure by state boards or commissions;

(15) Military service discharge records or DD Form

214, the Certificate of Release from Active Duty of the

United States Department of Defense, filed with the county recorder as provided under § 14-2-102, for veterans discharged from service less than seventy (70) years from the current date;

(16)

Vulnerability assessments submitted by a public water system on or before June 30, 2004, to the Administrator of the United States Environmental

Protection Agency for a period of ten (10) years from the

date of submission;

(17) (A) Records, including analyses, investigations, studies, reports, or recommendations, containing information relating to any Department of Human Services risk or security assessment, known or suspected security vulnerability, or safeguard related to compliance with the Heath Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 orprotection of other confidential department information.

(B)

The records shall include:

(i)

Risk and security assessments;

(ii)

Plans and proposals for preventing and mitigating privacy and security risks;

(iii)

Emergency response and recovery records;

(iv)

Privacy and security plans and procedures;

and

(v)

Any other records containing information that if disclosed might jeopardize or compromise efforts to secure and protect personal health information or other

protected department information.

(C)

This subdivision (b)(17) expires on July 1,

2009

(18) (A)

Records, including analyses, investigations, studies, reports, recommendations, requests for proposals, drawings, diagrams, blueprints, and plans, containing information relating to security for any public water system.

(B)

The records shall include:

(i)

Risk and vulnerability assessments;

(ii)

Plans and proposals for preventing and mitigating security risks;

(iii)

Emergency response and recovery records;

(iv)

Security plans and procedures; and

(v)

Any other records containing information that if disclosed might jeopardize or compromise efforts to secure and protect the public water system.

(C) This subdivision (b)(17) shall expire on July 1,

2013; and

(19) Records pertaining to the issuance, renewal, expiration, suspension, or revocation of a license to carry a concealed handgun, or a present or past licensure under

Section 5-73-301 et seq., including without limitation all

records provided to or obtained by any local, state, or federal governments, their officials, agents, or employees in the investigation of an applicant, licensee, or past licensee and all records pertaining to a criminal or health history

check conducted on the applicant, licensee, or past licensee except that:

(A) Information or other records regarding an applicant, licensee, or past licensee may be released to a law enforcement agency for the purpose of assisting in a criminal investigation or prosecution, or for determining validity of or eligibility for a license;

 (B) Names of an applicant, licensee, or past licensee may be released as contained in investigative or arrest reports of law enforcement that are subject to release as public records; and the name and the corresponding zip code of an applicant, licensee, or past licensee may be released upon request by a citizen of Arkansas.

(c)

(1) Notwithstanding subdivision (b)(12) of this section, all employee evaluation or job performance records, including preliminary notes and other materials, shall be

open to public inspection only upon final administrative resolution of any suspension or termination proceeding atwhich the records form a basis for the decision to suspend or terminate the employee and if there is a compelling public interest in their disclosure.

(2) Any personnel or evaluation records exempt from disclosure under this chapter shall nonetheless be made available to the person about whom the records are maintained or to that person’s designated representative.

(3)

(A) Upon receiving a request for the examination or copying of personnel or evaluation records, the custodian of the records shall determine within twenty four (24) hours of the receipt of the request whether the records are exempt from disclosure and make efforts to the fullest extent possible to notify the person making the request and the subject of the records of that decision.

(B)

(i) If the subject of the records cannot be contacted in person or by telephone within the twenty-four hour period, the custodian shall send written notice via

overnight mail to the subject of the records at his or her last known address. Either the custodian, requester, or the subject of the records may immediately seek an opinion from the Attorney General who, within three (3) working

days of receipt of the request, shall issue an opinion stating whether the decision is consistent with this chapter.

(ii) In the event of a review by the Attorney

General, the custodian shall not disclose the records until the Attorney General has issued his or her opinion.

(C) However, nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent the requester or the subject of the records from seeking judicial review of the custodian’s decision or the decision of the Attorney General.

(d)

(1) Reasonable access to public records and reasonable comforts and facilities for the full exercise of the right to inspect and copy those records shall not be denied to any citizen.

(2)

(A) Upon request and payment of a fee as provided in subdivision (d)(3) of this section, the custodian shall furnish copies of public records if the custodian has the necessary duplicating equipment/

(B) A citizen may request a copy of a public record in any medium in which the record is readily available or in any format to which it is readily convertible with

the custodian’s existing software.

(C) A custodian is not required to compile information or create a record in response to a request made under this section

(3)

(A)

(i) Except as provided in § 25-19-109 or by law, any fee for copies shall not exceed the actual costs of reproduction, including the costs of the medium of reproduction, supplies, equipment, and maintenance, but not including existing agency personnel time associated with searching for, retrieving, reviewing, or copying the records.

(ii) The custodian may also charge the actual costs of mailing or transmitting the record by facsimile or other electronic means.

(iii) If the estimated fee exceeds twenty five dollars ($25.00), the custodian may require the requester to pay that fee in advance.

(iv) Copies may be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge if the custodian determines that the records have been requested primarily for noncommercial purposes and that waiver or reduction of the fee is in the

public interest.

(B) The custodian shall provide an itemized breakdown

of charges under subdivision (d)(3)(A) of this section.

(e)

If a public record is in active use or storage and, therefore, not

available at the time a citizen asks to examine it,

the custodian shall certify this fact in writing to the applicant and

 set a date and hour within three (3) working days

at which time the record will be available for the exercise

of the right given by this chapter.

(f)

(1) No request to inspect, copy, or obtain copies of public records shall be denied on the ground that information exempt from disclosure is commingled with nonexempt information.

(2) Any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be provided after deletion of the exempt information.

(3) The amount of information deleted shall be indicated on the released portion of the record and, if technically feasible, at the place in the record where the deletion was made.

(4) If it is necessary to separate exempt from nonexempt information in order to permit a citizen to inspect, copy, or obtain copies of public records, the custodian

shall bear the cost of the separation.

(g)

Any computer hardware or software acquired by an entity subject to § 25-19-103(5)(A) after July 1, 2001, shall be in full compliance with the requirements of this section and shall not impede public access to records in

electronic form.

(h) Notwithstanding any Arkansas law to the contrary, at the conclusion of any investigation conducted by a state agency in pursuit of civil penalties against the subject of the investigation, any settlement agreement entered into

by a state agency shall be deemed a public document for the purposes of this chapter. However, the provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any investigation or settlement agreement involving any state tax covered by the

Arkansas Tax Procedure Act, § 26-18-101 et seq.

**25-19-106. Open public meetings.**

(a) Except as otherwise specifically provided by law, all meetings, formal or informal, special or regular, of the governing bodies of all municipalities, counties, townships, and school districts and all boards, bureaus, commissions, or

organizations of the State of Arkansas, except grand juries, supported wholly or in part by public funds or expending public funds, shall be public meetings.

(b)

(1) The time and place of each regular meeting shall be furnished to anyone who requests the information.

**(2) In the event of emergency or special meetings, the person calling the meeting shall notify the representatives of the newspapers, radio stations, and television stations, if any, located in the county in which the meeting is to beheld and any news media located elsewhere that cover regular meetings of the governing body and that have requested to be so notified of emergency or special meetings of the time, place, and date of the meeting. Notification shall be made at least two (2) hours before the meeting takes place in order that the public shall have representatives at**

**the meeting.**

(c)

(1) Executive sessions will be permitted only for the purpose of considering employment, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining, or resignation of any public officer or employee. The specific purpose of the executive

session shall be announced in public before going into executive session.

(2)

(A) Only the person holding the top administrative position in the public agency, department, or office involved, the immediate supervisor of the employee

involved, and the employee may be present at the executive session when so requested by the governing body, board, commission, or other public body holding the executive session.

(B) Any person being interviewed for the top administrative position in the public agency, department, or office involved may be present at the executive session

when so requested by the governing board, commission, or other public body holding the executive session.

(3) Executive sessions must never be called for the purpose of defeating the reason or the spirit of this chapter.

(4) No resolution, ordinance, rule, contract, regulation, or motion considered or arrived at in executive session will be legal unless, following the executive session, the public body reconvenes in public session and presents

and votes on the resolution, ordinance, rule, contract, regulation, or motion.

(5)

(A) Boards and commissions of this state may meet in executive session for purposes of preparing examination materials and answers to examination materials which are administered to applicants for licensure from state agencies.

(B) Boards and commissions are excluded from

this chapter for the administering of examinations to applicants for licensure.

(6)

(A) Subject to the provisions of subdivision (c)(4) of this section, any public agency may meet in executive session for the purpose of considering, evaluating, or discussing matters pertaining to public water system security as described in § 25-19-105(b)(18).

(B) Subdivision (c)(6) of this section shall expire on July 1, 2013.

**25-19-107. Appeal from denial of rights - Attorney**

**fees.**

(a) Any citizen denied the rights granted to him or her by

this chapter may appeal immediately from the denial to the

Pulaski County Circuit Court or to the circuit court of the

residence of the aggrieved party, if the State of Arkansas

or a department, agency, or institution of the state is

involved, or to any of the circuit courts of the appropriate

judicial districts when an agency of a county, municipality,

township, or school district, or a private organization

supported by or expending public funds, is involved.

 (b) Upon written application of the person denied the

rights provided for in this chapter, or any interested party,

it shall be mandatory upon the circuit court having jurisdiction

to fix and assess a day the petition is to be heard

within seven (7) days of the date of the application of the

petitioner, and to hear and determine the case.

(c) Those who refuse to comply with the orders of the

court shall be found guilty of contempt of court.

(d)

(1) In any action to enforce the rights granted by this

chapter, or in any appeal therefrom, the court shall assess

against the defendant reasonable attorney’s fees and other

litigation expenses reasonably incurred by a plaintiff who

has substantially prevailed unless the court finds that the

position of the defendant was substantially justified.

(2) If the defendant has substantially prevailed in the

action, the court may assess expenses against the plaintiff

only upon a finding that the action was initiated primarily

for frivolous or dilatory purposes.

(e)

(1) Notwithstanding subsection (d)(1) of this section,

the court shall not assess reasonable attorney’s fees or

other litigation expenses reasonably incurred by a plaintiff

against the State of Arkansas or a department, agency, or

institution of the state.

(2)

(A) A plaintiff who substantially prevailed in an

action under this section against the State of Arkansas or a

department, agency, or institution of the state may file a

claim with the Arkansas Claims Commission to recover

reasonable attorney’s fees and other litigation expenses

reasonably incurred.

(B) A claim for reasonable attorney’s fees and litigation expenses

 reasonably incurred in an action against

the State of Arkansas or a department, agency, or institution of the

state shall be filed with the commission pursuant to Section 19-10-201

et seq. within sixty (60) days of the final disposition of the appeal under

subsection (a) of this section.

**25-19-108. Information for public guidance.**

(a) Each state agency, board, and commission shall prepare and make available:

(1) A description of its organization, including central and field offices, the general course and method of its operations, and the established locations, including, but

not limited to, telephone numbers and street, mailing, electronic mail, and

Internet addresses and the methods by which the public may obtain access to public records;

(2) A list and general description of its records, including computer databases;

(3)

(A) Its regulations, rules of procedure, any formally proposed changes, and all other written statements of policy or interpretations formulated, adopted, or used by the agency, board, or commission in the discharge of its functions.

(B)

(i) Rules, regulations, and opinions used in this section shall refer only to substantive and material items that directly affect procedure and decision-making.

(ii) Personnel policies, procedures, and internal policies shall not be subject to the provisions of this section.

(iii) Surveys, polls, and fact-gathering for decision making shall not be subject to the provisions of this section.

(iv) Statistical data furnished to a state agency shall be posted only after the agency has concluded its final compilation and result.

(4) All documents composing an administrative adjudication decision in a contested matter, except the parts of the decision that are expressly confidential under state or federal law; and

(5) Copies of all records, regardless of medium or format, released under § 25-190-105 which, because of the nature of their subject matter, the agency, board, or commission determines have become or are likely to become the subject of frequent requests for substantially the same records.

(b)

(1) All materials made available by a state agency, board, or commission pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and created after July 1, 2003, shall be made publicly accessible, without charge, in electronic form via the Internet.

(2) It shall be a sufficient response to a request to inspect or copy the materials that they are available on the Internet at a specified location, unless the requester specifies another medium or format under § 25-19-105(d)(2)(B).

**25-19-109. Special requests for electronic information.**

(a)

(1) At his or her discretion, a custodian may agree to

summarize, compile, or tailor electronic data in a particular

manner or medium and may agree to provide the data in an

electronic format to which it is not readily convertible.

(2) Where the cost and time involved in complying

with the requests are relatively minimal, custodians should

agree to provide the data as requested.

(b)

(1) If the custodian agrees to a request, the custodian

may charge the actual, verifiable costs of personnel time

exceeding two (2) hours associated with the tasks, in addition

 to copying costs authorized by § 25-19-105(d)(3).

(2) The charge for personnel time shall not exceed the

salary of the lowest paid employee or contractor who, in

the discretion of the custodian, has the necessary skill and

training to respond to the request

(c) The custodian shall provide an itemized breakdown of

charges under subsection (b) of this section.

**25-19-110. Exemptions.**

(a) Beginning July 1, 2009, in order to be effective, a law

that enacts a new exemption to the requirements of this

chapter or that substantially amends an existing exemption

to the requirements of this chapter shall state that the record

or meeting is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act

of 1967, § 25-19-101 et seq.

(b) For purposes of this section:

(1) An exemption from the requirements of this chapter is substantially

amended if the amendment expands the scope of the exemption to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records; and

(2) An exemption from the requirements of this chapter is not substantially amended if the amendment narrows the scope of the exemption.