Washington Attorney General's new site guides public on grabbing government records

Local News

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OLYMPIA - Open government advocates have a new resource at the Attorney General's Office. The AGO has launched "Unredacted: Uncovering the truth about Public Records and Open Public Meetings.""Citizens contact us when, for example, they believe that a city or county council meeting has been held illegally behind closed doors," said Attorney General Rob McKenna. "Our new site provides a roadmap for pulling back the curtain to find out what elected officials are up to."This new resource provides the public with a glimpse into the life of AGO Open Government Ombudsman Tim Ford as he answers questions about the state's public records and open meetings acts. "Local officials want to ensure that they're taking the correct steps to provide transparency," Ford said. "This site will also be a great resource for them to read answers to the most common questions about opening up government processes to everyday people."

New questions and answers are posted regularly. Questions and answers already include: **How can a citizen stop illegal executive sessions?**
Agencies may conduct a closed executive session only to discuss limited issues as specifically authorized by law pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1) (Read more). **Can a public record be photographed by a requester?**
The Public Records Act clearly does not prohibit photographing and requires an agency to assist the requester (Read more).

How may I obtain public records from a state or local agency?
A typical request might look like this: Dear Records Officer:
Pursuant to the Public Records Act, Ch 42.56. RCW, please provide me the opportunity to inspect public records related to _____ (be specific as possible as it will reduce the time for an agency to provide you the documents). I may choose to copy specific records after my inspection (Read more).Since taking office in 2005, McKenna has made it a high priority to strengthen the public's right to know about government's inner-workings, through open meetings and access to government records. McKenna's office drafted and passed legislation to strengthen the Public Records Act. He created an open government ombudsman to oversee public access and successfully fought to create a Sunshine Committee to review exemptions to the Public Records Act. The Attorney General also provides an Open Government Internet Manual for citizens and local elected officials.