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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

GOVERNMENT IN THE SUNSHINE ACT (S. 5)

The President today signed the Government in the Sunshine Act of 1976.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Act is to increase the opportunity for the public to observe governmental decision-making and to enhance the public's faith in the integrity of government. The bill was sponsored by Senator Lawton Chiles (D.-Fla.) and 40 others who urged "that the Government conduct the people's business in public."

GOVERNMENT IN THE SUNSHINE ACT (S. 5)

The Act requires multiheaded agencies, e.g., the independent regulatory agencies and other agencies such as the Civil Service Commission, the United States Postal Service, the Export-Import Bank and the governing board of the National Science Foundation, to hold their meetings open to the public unless any of ten specific reasons for holding closed meetings is present. These agencies will be required to give advance notice of meetings where possible. In addition, verbatim transcripts of certain closed meetings will be made available to the public. The Act affords judicial remedies when an agency has not complied with these procedures.

The Act has five key features:

- Requires generally that meetings of the members of multiheaded Executive agencies be open to public observation with certain specified exceptions;
- Establishes procedures for closing certain meetings to the public;
- Provides for judicial review of agency action regarding open meetings and related provisions;
- Prohibits ex parte communications in certain administrative hearings; and,
- Amends the Freedom of Information and Federal Advisory Committee Acts.

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