SENATE, No. 782

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

216th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2014 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Senator LORETTA WEINBERG
District 37 (Bergen)
Senator JOSEPH PENNACCHIO
District 26 (Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS
Makes certain access changes to open public records act; establishes State public finance website and creates program for development of local websites; makes appropriation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel
AN ACT concerning access to certain government records and establishment of a program for developing public websites, amending and supplementing P.L.1963, c.73, supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes, amending P.L.1995, c.23 and P.L.2001, c.404, and making an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. (New section) This act, P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), shall be known and may be cited as the "Martin O'Shea Open Public Records and Transparency Act."

2. Section 1 of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1) is amended to read as follows:
   1. The Legislature finds and declares it to be the public policy of this State that:
   government records shall be readily accessible for inspection, copying, or examination by the citizens of this State, with certain exceptions, for the protection of the public interest, and any limitations on the right of access accorded by P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemeted, shall be construed in favor of the public's right of access;
   all government records shall be subject to public access unless exempt from such access by: P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented; any other statute; resolution of either or both houses of the Legislature; regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute or Executive Order of the Governor; Executive Order of the Governor; Rules of Court; any federal law, federal regulation, or federal order;
   a public agency has a responsibility and an obligation to safeguard from public access a citizen's personal information with which it has been entrusted when disclosure thereof would violate the citizen's reasonable expectation of privacy; and nothing contained in P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and supplemented, shall be construed as affecting in any way the common law right of access to any record, including but not limited to criminal investigatory records of a law enforcement agency.
   (cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.1)

3. Section 1 of P.L.1995, c.23 (C.47:1A-1.1) is amended to read as follows:
   1. As used in P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented:

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
"Biotechnology" means any technique that uses living organisms, or parts of living organisms, to make or modify products, to improve plants or animals, or to develop microorganisms for specific uses; including the industrial use of recombinant DNA, cell fusion, and novel bioprocessing techniques.

"Custodian of a government record" or "custodian" means in the case of a municipality, the municipal clerk and in the case of any other public agency, the officer officially designated by formal or written action of that agency's director or governing body, as the case may be.

"Government record" or "record" means any paper, written, electronic, or printed book, document, drawing, map, plan, photograph, microfilm, data processed or image processed document, information stored or maintained electronically or by any sound-recording, video or audio recording or in a similar device, or any copy thereof, that has been made, maintained or kept on file, or is required by law to be made, maintained or kept on file, in the course of its official business by any officer, commission, agency or authority of the State or of any political subdivision thereof, including subordinate boards thereof, public agency, or that has been received in the course of its official business by any officer, commission, agency or authority of the State or of any political subdivision thereof, including subordinate boards thereof, public agency. Any video or audio recordings made of those portions of meetings from which the public was not excluded pursuant to subsection b. of section 7 of P.L.1975, c.231 (C.10:4-12), including emergency meetings held pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of P.L.1975, c.231 (C.10:4-9), should be available in unedited form. The terms shall not include inter-agency or intra-agency advisory, consultative, or deliberative material.

“Advisory, consultative or deliberative material” means material that is used and relied upon during the consultative process prior to the completion of a competitive application or the adoption of an ordinance, rule, regulation, or policy by any public agency and that reflects personal opinions, recommendations, and deliberations comprising part of a process by which public agency decisions and policies are formulated, rather than factual or statistical data, information or the official policy of that body, and the release of which would be injurious to the consultative function of government.

A government record shall not include the following information which is deemed to be confidential for the purposes of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented:

- information received by a member of the Legislature from a constituent or information held by a member of the Legislature concerning a constituent, including but not limited to information in written form or contained in any e-mail or computer data base, or in
any telephone record whatsoever, unless it is information the
constituent is required by law to transmit;
any memorandum, correspondence, notes, report or other
communication prepared by, or for, the specific use of a member of
the Legislature in the course of the member's official duties, except
that this provision shall not apply to an otherwise publicly-
accessible report which is required by law to be submitted to the
Legislature or its members;
any copy, reproduction or facsimile of any photograph, negative
or print, including instant photographs and videotapes of the body,
or any portion of the body, of a deceased person, taken by or for the
medical examiner at the scene of death or in the course of a post
mortem examination or autopsy made by or caused to be made by
the medical examiner except:
when used in a criminal action or proceeding in this State which
relates to the death of that person,
for the use as a court of this State permits, by order after good
cause has been shown and after written notification of the request
for the court order has been served at least five days before the
order is made upon the county prosecutor for the county in which
the post mortem examination or autopsy occurred,
for use in the field of forensic pathology or for use in medical or
scientific education or research, or
for use by any law enforcement agency in this State or any other
state or federal law enforcement agency;
criminal investigatory records;
victims' records, except that a victim of a crime shall have access
to the victim's own records;
trade secrets and proprietary commercial or financial information
obtained from any source. For the purposes of this paragraph, trade
secrets shall include data processing software obtained by a public
body under a licensing agreement which prohibits its disclosure;
any record within the attorney-client privilege. This paragraph
shall not be construed as exempting from access attorney or
consultant bills or invoices except that such bills or invoices may be
redacted to remove any information protected by the attorney-client
privilege;
administrative or technical information regarding computer
hardware, software and networks which, if disclosed, would
jeopardize computer security;
émergency or security information or procedures for any
buildings or facility which, if disclosed, would jeopardize security
of the building or facility or persons therein;
security measures and surveillance techniques which, if
disclosed, would create a risk to the safety of persons, property,
electronic data or software;
information which, if disclosed, would give an advantage to
competitors or bidders;
information generated by or on behalf of public employers or
public employees in connection with any sexual harassment
complaint filed with a public employer or with any grievance filed
by or against an individual or in connection with collective
negotiations, including documents and statements of strategy or
negotiating position;
information which is a communication between a public agency
and its insurance carrier, administrative service organization or risk
management office;
information which is to be kept confidential pursuant to court
order;
any copy of form DD-214, or that form, issued by the United
States Government, or any other certificate of honorable discharge,
or copy thereof, from active service or the reserves of a branch of
the Armed Forces of the United States, or from service in the
organized militia of the State, that has been filed by an individual
with a public agency, except that a veteran or the veteran's spouse
or surviving spouse shall have access to the veteran's own records;
that portion of any document which discloses the social security
number, credit card number, unlisted telephone number or driver
license number of any person; except for use by any government
agency, including any court or law enforcement agency, in carrying
out its functions, or any private person or entity acting on behalf
thereof, or any private person or entity seeking to enforce payment
of court-ordered child support; except with respect to the disclosure
of driver information by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle
Commission as permitted by section 2 of P.L.1997, c.188 (C.39:2-3.4); and except that a social security number contained in a record
required by law to be made, maintained or kept on file by a public
agency shall be disclosed when access to the document or
disclosure of that information is not otherwise prohibited by State
or federal law, regulation or order or by State statute, resolution of
either or both houses of the Legislature, Executive Order of the
Governor, rule of court or regulation promulgated under the
authority of any statute or executive order of the Governor;
that portion of the electronic-mail addresses provided to the
government entity for the sole purpose of receiving official public
notifications; and
that portion of any document that requires and would disclose
personal identifying information of persons under the age of 18
years, except with respect to the disclosure of driver information by
the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission as permitted by section
A government record shall not include, with regard to any public
institution of higher education, the following information which is
deemed to be privileged and confidential:

pedagogical, scholarly and/or academic research records and/or
the specific details of any research project conducted under the
auspices of a public higher education institution in New Jersey,
including, but not limited to research, development information,
testing procedures, or information regarding test participants,
related to the development or testing of any pharmaceutical or
pharmaceutical delivery system, except that a custodian may not
deny inspection of a government record or part thereof that gives
the name, title, expenditures, source and amounts of funding and
date when the final project summary of any research will be
available;

test questions, scoring keys and other examination data
pertaining to the administration of an examination for employment
or academic examination;

records of pursuit of charitable contributions or records
containing the identity of a donor of a gift if the donor requires non-
disclosure of the donor's identity as a condition of making the gift
provided that the donor has not received any benefits of or from the
institution of higher education in connection with such gift other
than a request for memorialization or dedication;

valuable or rare collections of books and/or documents obtained
by gift, grant, bequest or devise conditioned upon limited public
access;

information contained on individual admission applications; and
information concerning student records or grievance or
disciplinary proceedings against a student to the extent disclosure
would reveal the identity of the student.

The term "government record" shall include allowances sold at
auction pursuant to P.L.2007, c.340 (C.26:2C-45 et seq.) or any
similar greenhouse gas initiative, together with the auction clearing
price for each allowance, the identity of the winning bidder, and the
quantity of allowances obtained by each bidder, and of which none
shall be considered to be a trade secret within the scope of this act,
P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.). The term shall also include
records containing the names of reviewers of grants, donations,
gifts or applications made to a public agency including the names of
reviewers of charter school applications, which names shall not be
redacted, and EZ pass records, or substantially similar records, for
vehicles owned by the State, other than those reflecting law
enforcement usage notwithstanding any other law to the contrary.

"Public agency" or "agency" means any of the principal
departments in the Executive Branch of State Government, and any
division, agency, authority, board, bureau, office, commission or
other instrumentality within or created by such department; the
Legislature of the State and any office, board, bureau or commission within or created by the Legislative Branch; and any independent State authority, commission, instrumentality or agency. The terms shall also mean any political subdivision of the State or combination of political subdivisions, and any division, board, bureau, office, commission or other instrumentality within or created by a political subdivision of the State or combination of political subdivisions, and any independent authority, commission, instrumentality or agency created by a political subdivision or combination of political subdivisions. The term shall also include a school district, special district, an educational information resource center established pursuant to P.L.1983, c.186 (C.18A:6-95.1 et seq.), or charter school, quasi-governmental agency, or public employee. The term shall also mean and include, by way of example but not limitation, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, the New Jersey Association of Counties, the New Jersey School Boards Association, and the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, and a substantially similar successor organization or association, a joint insurance group or fund for political subdivisions of this State, and bi-State agencies.

“Quasi-governmental agency” means any association, commission, agency, authority, organization, public-private entity, or any other entity, in which one or more public agencies exercise substantial control, or as determined by the Government Records Council or a court of law, by considering factors including but not limited to: whether a public agency exercises control over the quasi-government agency or the public agency maintains the ability to review, approve, or reject the quasi-governmental agency’s proposals or plans, holds a beneficial interest in the quasi-governmental agency’s assets, is the source of funding of, or is indebted to, or is a creditor of, or guarantor of the debts of, the quasi-governmental agency. The term shall not include any entity involving the Legislature or any organization organized under paragraph (3) of subsection c. of section 501 of the federal Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C.s.501) that was not created by, or with the approval of, a public agency solely for the purpose of assisting that public agency or any labor organization or any contractor providing goods or services to a public agency except as otherwise provided by this subsection.

“Public employee” means any person who occupies any office, position or employment in a public agency, as defined in this section, but only to the extent that he or she acts in an official capacity. This term shall also include, but shall not be limited to, an elected and appointed person.

"Law enforcement agency" means a public agency, or part thereof, determined by the Attorney General to have law enforcement responsibilities.
"Constituent" means any State resident or other person communicating with a member of the Legislature.

"Member of the Legislature" means any person elected or selected to serve in the New Jersey Senate or General Assembly.

"Criminal investigatory record" means a record which is not required by law, statute, rule, regulation, or directive, general operating procedure from the New Jersey Attorney General or from the law enforcement agency in which the record is sought, or general order of the New Jersey Attorney General or of the law enforcement agency in which the record is sought, to be made, maintained or kept on file that is held by a law enforcement agency which pertains to any criminal investigation or related civil enforcement proceeding. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, this provision shall not be construed to allow any public agency to prohibit access to a record that was open for public inspection, examination, or copying, before any criminal investigation or related civil enforcement proceeding commenced.

"Victim's record" means an individually-identifiable file or document held by a victims' rights agency which pertains directly to a victim of a crime except that a victim of a crime shall have access to the victim's own records.

"Victim of a crime" means a person who has suffered personal or psychological injury or death or incurs loss of or injury to personal or real property as a result of a crime, or if such a person is deceased or incapacitated, a member of that person's immediate family.

"Victims' rights agency" means a public agency, or part thereof, the primary responsibility of which is providing services, including but not limited to food, shelter, or clothing, medical, psychiatric, psychological or legal services or referrals, information and referral services, counseling and support services, or financial services to victims of crimes, including victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, violent crime, child endangerment, child abuse or child neglect, and the Victims of Crime Compensation Board, established pursuant to P.L.1971, c.317 (C.52:4B-1 et seq.). (cf: P.L.2005, c.170, s.1)

4. Section 3 of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-3) is amended to read as follows:

3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented, where it shall appear that the record or records which are sought to be inspected, copied, or examined shall pertain to an investigation in progress by any public agency, the right of access provided for in P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented may be denied if the inspection, copying or examination of such record or records shall be inimical to the public interest; provided, however,
that this provision shall not be construed to allow any public agency
to prohibit access to a record of that agency that was open for
public inspection, examination, or copying before the investigation
commenced. Whenever a public agency, during the course of an
investigation, obtains from another public agency a government
record that was open for public inspection, examination or copying
before the investigation commenced, the investigating agency shall
provide the other agency with sufficient access to the record to
allow the other agency to comply with requests made pursuant to
P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.).

b. Notwithstanding the provisions of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-
1 et seq.), as amended and supplemented, records containing the
following information concerning a criminal investigation shall be
available to the public within 24 hours or as soon as practicable, of
a request for such information:

where a crime has been reported but no arrest yet made,
information as to the type of crime, time, location and type of
weapon, if any;

if an arrest has been made, information as to the name, address
and age of any victims unless there has not been sufficient
opportunity for notification of next of kin of any victims of injury
and/or death to any such victim or where the release of the names of
any victim would be contrary to existing law or court rule. In
deciding on the release of information as to the identity of a victim,
the safety of the victim and the victim's family, and the integrity of
any ongoing investigation, shall be considered;

if an arrest has been made, information as to the defendant's
name, age, residence, occupation, marital status and similar
background information and, the identity of the complaining party
unless the release of such information is contrary to existing law or
court rule;

information as to the text of any charges such as the complaint,
accusation and indictment unless sealed by the court or unless the
release of such information is contrary to existing law or court rule;

information as to the identity of the investigating and arresting
personnel and agency and the length of the investigation;

information of the circumstances immediately surrounding the
arrest, including but not limited to the time and place of the arrest,
resistance, if any, pursuit, possession and nature and use of
weapons and ammunition by the suspect and by the police; and

information as to circumstances surrounding bail, whether it was
posted and the amount thereof.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection, if the
custodian of a government record asserts that part of a particular
record is exempt from public access pursuant to P.L.1963, c.73
(C.47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and supplemented, the custodian
shall redact from a copy of the record that portion which the
custodian asserts is exempt from access and shall promptly permit access to the remainder of the record. If the custodian of a government record redacts information from a copy of the record, the custodian shall provide the requestor with a redacted version of the document and one affidavit for the entire request that states the date of the record, the originator or author of the record, the subject matter or title of the record, the number of pages with redactions, and the specific statutory provision or other lawful basis for each such redaction. This provision shall only apply to information redacted on or after the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill). If a document was redacted prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill), a service charge for time may be assessed to the requestor for information as to why a document was redacted.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection, where it shall appear that the information requested or to be examined will jeopardize the safety of any person or jeopardize any investigation in progress or may be otherwise inappropriate to release, such information may be withheld. This exception shall be narrowly construed to prevent disclosure of information that would be harmful to a bona fide law enforcement purpose or the public safety. Whenever a law enforcement official determines that it is necessary to withhold information, the official shall issue a brief statement explaining the decision.

(cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.5)

5. Section 6 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-5) is amended to read as follows:

6. a. The custodian of a government record shall permit the record to be inspected, examined, and copied by any person during regular business hours; or in the case of a municipality having a population of 5,000 or fewer according to the most recent federal decennial census, a board of education having a total district enrollment of 500 or fewer, or a public authority having less than $10 million in assets, during not less than six regular business hours over not less than three business days per week or the entity's regularly-scheduled business hours, whichever is less; unless a government record is exempt from public access by: P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented; any other statute; resolution of either or both houses of the Legislature; regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute or Executive Order of the Governor; Executive Order of the Governor; Rules of Court; any federal law; federal regulation; or federal order. Prior to allowing access to any government record, the custodian thereof shall redact from that record any information which discloses the social security number, credit card number, unlisted telephone number, or driver license number of any person; except
for use by any government agency, including any court or law
enforcement agency, in carrying out its functions, or any private
person or entity acting on behalf thereof, or any private person or
entity seeking to enforce payment of court-ordered child support;
except with respect to the disclosure of driver information by the
New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission as permitted by section 2 of
P.L.1997, c.188 (C.39:2-3.4); and except that a social security
number contained in a record required by law to be made,
maintained or kept on file by a public agency shall be disclosed
when access to the document or disclosure of that information is not
otherwise prohibited by State or federal law, regulation or order or
by State statute, resolution of either or both houses of the
Legislature, Executive Order of the Governor, rule of court or
regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute or
executive order of the Governor. Except where an agency can
demonstrate an emergent need, a regulation that limits access to
government records shall not be retroactive in effect or applied to
deny a request for access to a government record that is pending
before the agency, the council or a court at the time of the adoption
of the regulation.

If the custodian of a government record redacts information from
a copy of the record, the custodian shall provide the requestor with
a redacted version of the document and one affidavit for the entire
request that states the date of the record, the originator or author of
the record, the subject matter or title of the record, the number of
pages with redactions, and the specific statutory provision or other
lawful basis for each such redaction. This provision shall only
apply to information redacted on or after the effective date of P.L.
, c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill). If a document
was redacted prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending
before the Legislature as this bill), a service charge for time may be
assessed to the requestor for information as to why a document was
redacted.

b. A copy or copies of a government record may be purchased
by any person upon payment of the fee prescribed by law or
regulation. Except as otherwise provided by law or regulation, the
fee assessed for the duplication of a government record embodied in
the form of printed matter shall be $0.05 per letter size page or
smaller, and $0.07 per legal size page or larger. If a public agency
can demonstrate that its actual costs for duplication of a government
record exceed the foregoing rates, the public agency shall be
permitted to charge the actual cost of duplicating the record. The
actual cost of duplicating the record, upon which all copy fees are
based, shall be the cost of materials and supplies used to make a
copy of the record, but shall not include the cost of labor or other
overhead expenses associated with making the copy except as
provided for in subsection c. of this section. Access to electronic
records and non-printed materials shall be provided free of charge, but the public agency may charge for the actual costs of any needed supplies such as computer discs.

If a public agency maintains the record in an electronic format or medium that can be electronically mailed without charge to the requestor, it shall make the requestor aware and allow for delivery of the record in such format or medium. The requestor shall have seven business days to respond to the custodian, otherwise the request is deemed fulfilled.

If the government record is on the public agency website, the custodian shall advise the requester to obtain the record from the agency website. If the requester prefers to purchase copies from the public agency, he or she shall be permitted to purchase such copies from the records custodian, in accordance with the provisions of this act, P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.). The requestor shall have seven business days to advise the custodian that he or she prefers to purchase the copies, otherwise the request may be deemed fulfilled.

c. Whenever the nature, format, medium, manner of collation, or volume of a government record embodied in the form of printed matter to be inspected, examined, or copied pursuant to this section is such that the record cannot be reproduced by ordinary document copying equipment in ordinary business size or involves an extraordinary expenditure of time and effort to accommodate the request, the public agency may charge, in addition to the actual cost of duplicating the record, a special service charge. A special service charge may only be imposed when the time expended in responding to the request shall exceed a total of four hours. Such a charge shall be reasonable and shall be based upon the actual, direct cost of providing the copy or copies; provided, however, that in the case of a municipality, rates for the duplication of particular records when the actual cost of copying exceeds the foregoing rates shall be established in advance by ordinance. The rates in the case of a municipality, rates for the duplication of particular records when the actual cost of copying exceeds the foregoing rates shall be established in advance by ordinance. For purposes hereof, the actual, direct costs shall mean those expenditures that an agency actually incurs in searching for and duplicating documents to respond to a request, which includes basic rate of pay for the employee. Direct costs shall not include overhead expenses such as costs of space and heating or lighting the facility in which the records are stored. The requestor shall have the opportunity to review and object to the charge prior to it being incurred. During such review, the public agency shall provide the requestor, without charge, a detailed breakdown of how the special service charge was assessed including, at a minimum, reasonable estimates categorizing the hours needed to identify, copy or prepare for
inspection, and to produce and return the requested documents, and
the number of pages to be produced. Special service charges shall
not be assessed for requests for budgets, bills, vouchers, contracts
and public employee salary and overtime information unless the
request is deemed voluminous.

d. A custodian shall permit access to a government record and
provide a copy thereof in the medium or format requested if the
public agency maintains the record in that medium or format. If the
public agency does not maintain the record in the medium or format
requested, the custodian shall either convert the record to the
medium or format requested or provide a copy in some other
meaningful medium or format. If a request is for a record: (1) in a
medium or format not routinely used by the agency; (2) not
routinely developed or maintained by an agency; or (3) requiring a
substantial amount of manipulation or programming of information
technology, the agency may charge, in addition to the actual cost of
duplication, a special charge that shall be reasonable and shall be
based on the cost for any extensive use of information technology,
or for the labor cost of personnel providing the service, that is
actually incurred by the agency or attributable to the agency for the
programming, clerical, and supervisory assistance required, or both.

e. Immediate access ordinarily shall be granted to budgets,
bills, vouchers, contracts, including collective negotiations
agreements and individual employment contracts, and public
employee salary and overtime information for the current fiscal
year.

f. The custodian of a public agency shall adopt a form for the
use of any person who requests access to a government record held
or controlled by the public agency. The form shall provide space
for the name, address, and phone number of the requestor and a
brief description of the government record sought. The form shall
include space for the custodian to indicate which record will be
made available, when the record will be available, and the fees to be
charged. The form shall also include the following: (1) specific
directions and procedures for requesting a record; (2) a statement as
to whether prepayment of fees or a deposit is required; (3) the time
period within which the public agency is required by P.L.1963, c.73
(C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented, to make the
record available; (4) a statement of the requestor's right to challenge
decision by the public agency to deny access and the procedure
for filing an appeal; (5) space for the custodian to list reasons if a
request is denied in whole or in part; (6) space for the requestor to
sign and date the form; (7) space for the custodian to sign and date
the form if the request is fulfilled or denied. The custodian may
require a deposit against costs for reproducing documents sought
through an anonymous request whenever the custodian anticipates
that the information thus requested will cost in excess of $5 to reproduce.

If a request for information is made in writing on a document other than the form adopted by the public agency and the request contains the requisite information prescribed in this subsection, the custodian shall treat the request as if made on the form adopted by the public agency.

g. A request for access to a government record shall be in writing and hand-delivered, mailed, transmitted electronically, including by electronic mail, transmitted by facsimile when no more than four pages in length, or otherwise conveyed to the appropriate custodian. A custodian shall promptly comply with a request to inspect, examine, copy, or provide a copy of a government record. If the custodian 

is unable to comply with] denies a request for access, the custodian shall indicate the specific basis therefor on the request form and promptly return it to the requestor. The custodian shall sign and date the form and provide the requestor with a copy thereof. If the custodian of a government record asserts that part of a particular record is exempt from public access pursuant to P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented, the custodian shall delete or excise from a copy of the record that portion which the custodian asserts is exempt from access and shall promptly permit access to the remainder of the record.

If the custodian of a government record redacts information from a copy of the record, the custodian shall provide the requestor with a redacted version of the document and one affidavit for the entire request that states the date of the record, the originator or author of the record, the subject matter or title of the record, the number of pages with redactions, and the specific statutory provision or other lawful basis for each such redaction. This provision shall only apply to information redacted on or after the effective date of P.L. c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill). If a document was redacted prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill), a service charge for time may be assessed to the requestor for information as to why a document was redacted.

If the government record requested is temporarily unavailable because it is in use or in storage, the custodian shall so advise the requestor and shall make arrangements to promptly make available a copy of the record. If a request for access to a government record would substantially disrupt agency operations, the custodian may deny access to the record after attempting to reach a reasonable solution with the requestor that accommodates the interests of the requestor and the agency.

h. Any officer or employee of a public agency who receives a request for access to a government record shall forward the request to the custodian of the record or direct the requestor to the custodian of the record.
i. Unless a shorter time period is otherwise provided by statute, regulation, or executive order, a custodian of a government record shall grant access to a government record or deny a request for access to a government record as soon as possible, but not later than seven business days after receiving the request, including the business day on which the request was received by the records custodian, if received by noon, provided that the record is currently available and not in storage or archived. In the event a custodian fails to respond within seven business days after receiving a request, the failure to respond shall be deemed a denial of the request, unless the requestor has elected not to provide a name, address or telephone number, or other means of contacting the requestor. If the requestor has elected not to provide a name, address, or telephone number, or other means of contacting the requestor, the custodian shall not be required to respond until the requestor reappears before the custodian seeking a response to the original request. If the government record is in storage or archived, the requestor shall be so advised within seven business days after the custodian receives the request. The requestor shall be advised by the custodian when the record can be made available. If the record is not made available by that time, access shall be deemed denied.

A request received after 12 p.m. shall be deemed as received on the next business day.

j. A custodian shall post prominently in public view in the part or parts of the office or offices of the custodian that are open to or frequented by the public a statement that sets forth in clear, concise and specific terms the right to appeal a denial of, or failure to provide, access to a government record by any person for inspection, examination, or copying or for purchase of copies thereof and the procedure by which an appeal may be filed.

The custodian of a public agency that has a website shall, at a minimum, prominently post on the website the name, mailing address, electronic mailing address, phone number, and facsimile number for the custodian of records as well as a statement that information submitted to the agency may be a public record and available for public review.

k. The files maintained by the Office of the Public Defender that relate to the handling of any case shall be considered confidential and shall not be open to inspection by any person unless authorized by law, court order, or the State Public Defender. (cf: P.L.2010, c.75, s.5)

6. Section 7 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-6) is amended to read as follows:

7. A person who is denied access to a government record by the custodian of the record, at the option of the requestor, may:
institute a proceeding to challenge the custodian's decision or
seek injunctive relief by filing an action in Superior Court which
shall be heard in the vicinage where it is filed by a Superior Court
Judge who has been designated to hear such cases because of that
judge's knowledge and expertise in matters relating to access to
government records; or
in lieu of filing an action in Superior Court, file a complaint with
the Government Records Council established pursuant to section 8
of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-7). If the Government Records
Council does not render a decision within the time period
established pursuant to subsection b. of section 8 of P.L.2001, c.404
(C.47:1A-7), the requestor may institute a proceeding to challenge
the custodian's decision by filing an action in Superior Court. That
court proceeding shall be deemed filed as of the date of filing of the
proceeding before the Government Records Council and shall
render the proceedings pending before the Government Records
Council withdrawn.
The right to institute any proceeding under this section shall be
solely that of the requestor. Any such proceeding shall proceed in a
summary or expedited manner. The public agency shall have the
burden of proving that the denial of access is authorized by law. If
it is determined that access has been improperly denied, the court or
agency head shall order that access be allowed. A requestor who
prevails in any proceeding shall be entitled to a reasonable
attorney's fee award. However, in actions involving a record
required by law to be made, maintained or kept on file and that does
not exist at the time of the request, the prevailing requestor shall not
be entitled to an attorney's fee award if both: (1) the failure to
make, maintain, or keep the record is due to mere negligence or no
fault on the part of the public entity; and (2) the requestor was
informed in writing by formal certification or affidavit by the
records custodian prior to the filing of the complaint that the record
does not exist or no longer exists, the specific efforts taken to obtain
the record and why the record could not be produced. Under
appropriate circumstances, the rules of court and section 1 of
P.L.1988, c.46 (C. 2A:15-59.1), shall apply for frivolous causes of
action.
(cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.7)

7. Section 8 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-7) is amended to read
as follows:
8. a. There is established in, but not of, the Department of
Community Affairs a Government Records Council. The council
shall consist of [the Commissioner of Community Affairs or the
commissioner's designee, the Commissioner of Education or the
commissioner's designee, and three] the president of the Municipal
Clerks Association of New Jersey, or the president's designee, and
three public members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, not more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, one of whom shall have knowledge of or experience with the news media, one of whom is a representative of local government, and one whom shall be a member of the general public; and three public members appointed by the Governor, one upon the recommendation of the Senate President, one upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the General Assembly, and one upon the joint recommendation of the Senate President and Speaker of the General Assembly, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political party. The six public members appointed by the Governor shall serve during the term of the Governor making the appointment and until the appointment of a successor, except as otherwise provided for the chair. A public member shall not hold any other office while serving as a member of the council. A public member shall not receive a salary for service on the council but shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses associated with serving on the council and may receive such per diem payment as may be provided in the annual appropriations act. A member may be removed by the Governor only for cause upon notice and opportunity to be heard. Vacancies among the public members shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. The members of the council shall choose one of the public members to serve as the council's chair. The Governor shall appoint one of the seven members to serve as the chair of the council, and, once appointed, that member shall serve on the council and be chair of the council for a term of six years from the date of appointment, or until the end of his or her term of office as president of the Municipal Clerks Association of New Jersey, and until a successor is appointed and qualified. The chair may be removed by the Governor only for cause upon notice and opportunity to be heard. The council may employ an executive director and such professional and clerical staff as it deems necessary and may call upon the Department of Community Affairs for such assistance as it deems necessary and may be available to it.

b. The Government Records Council shall:

[establish an informal mediation program to facilitate the resolution of disputes regarding access to government records;]

receive, hear, review and adjudicate a complaint filed by any person concerning a denial of access to a government record by a records custodian;

render a decision on all disputes and complaints within 150 calendar days of the filing of the complaint;
issue advisory opinions, on its own initiative, as to whether a
particular type of record is a government record which is accessible
to the public;
prepare guidelines and an informational pamphlet for use by
records custodians in complying with the law governing access to
public records;
prepare an informational pamphlet explaining the public's right
of access to government records and the methods for resolving
disputes regarding access, which records custodians shall make
available to persons requesting access to a government record;
prepare lists for use by records custodians of the types of records
in the possession of public agencies which are government records;
make training opportunities available for records custodians and
other public officers and employees which explain the law
governing access to public records; [and]
post the recommendations that the Government Records Council
will consider for each case online twenty-four hours before the
meeting, to the extent known;
have paper copies available at the meeting at which the case will
be heard, with any changes or additions that were not present when
the information was posted online; and
operate an informational website and a toll-free helpline staffed
by knowledgeable employees of the council during regular business
hours which shall enable any person, including records custodians,
to call for information regarding the law governing access to public
records and allow any person to request mediation or to file a
complaint with the council when access has been denied;
In implementing the provisions of subsections d. and e. of this
section, the council shall: act, to the maximum extent possible, at
the convenience of the parties; utilize teleconferencing, faxing of
documents, e-mail and similar forms of modern communication;
and when in-person meetings are necessary, send representatives to
meet with the parties at a location convenient to the parties.
c. At the request of the council, a public agency shall produce
documents and ensure the attendance of witnesses with respect to
the council's investigation of any complaint or the holding of any
hearing. Each party shall have the opportunity to provide to the
council any documents or information necessary for the
adjudication of the case.
d. Upon receipt of a written complaint signed by any person
alleging that a custodian of a government record has improperly
denied that person access to a government record, the council shall
offer the parties the opportunity to resolve the dispute through
mediation pursuant to section 13 of P.L.  , c. (pending before the
Legislature as this bill). Mediation shall enable a person who has
been denied access to a government record and the custodian who
denied or failed to provide access thereto to attempt to mediate the
dispute through a process whereby a neutral mediator, who shall be trained in mediation selected by the council, acts to encourage and facilitate the resolution of the dispute. Mediation shall be an informal, nonadversarial process having the objective of helping the parties reach a mutually acceptable, voluntary agreement. The mediator shall assist the parties in identifying issues, foster joint problem solving, and explore settlement alternatives.

e. If any party declines mediation or if mediation fails to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all parties, the council shall initiate an investigation concerning the facts and circumstances set forth in the complaint. The council shall make a determination as to whether the complaint is within its jurisdiction or frivolous or without any reasonable factual basis. If the council shall conclude that the complaint is outside its jurisdiction, frivolous or without factual basis, it shall reduce that conclusion to writing and transmit a copy thereof to the complainant and to the records custodian against whom the complaint was filed. Otherwise, the council shall notify the records custodian against whom the complaint was filed of the nature of the complaint and the facts and circumstances set forth therein. The custodian shall have an opportunity to present the complaint by presenting the board with a signed and dated affidavit containing the same information provided to the complainant pursuant to subsection a. of section 6 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-5), if applicable, and any other statement or information concerning the complaint which the custodian wishes. The complainant shall have an opportunity to offer a brief reply affidavit that addresses any claims or defenses in the custodian’s answer. The complainant shall not set forth therein any new allegations that do not address the custodian’s claims or defense. If the council is able to make a determination as to a record's accessibility based upon the complaint and the custodian’s response thereto, and the complainant’s reply, it shall reduce that conclusion to writing and transmit a copy thereof to the complainant and to the records custodian against whom the complaint was filed. If the council is unable to make a determination as to a record's accessibility based upon the complaint, the custodian’s response thereto, and the complainant’s reply, the council shall conduct a hearing on the matter in conformity with the rules and regulations provided for hearings by a State agency in contested cases under the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), insofar as they may be applicable and practicable. The council shall, by a majority vote of its members, render a decision as to whether the record which is the subject of the complaint is a government record which must be made available for public access pursuant to P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented. If the council determines, by a majority vote of its
members, that a custodian has [knowingly and willfully] been
grossly negligent, as defined by section 12 of P.L.2001, c.404
(C.47:1A-11), and violated P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), as
amended and supplemented, and is found to have unreasonably
denied access under the totality of the circumstances, the council
may impose the penalties provided for in section 12 of P.L.2001,
c.404 (C.47:1A-11). A decision of the council may be appealed to
the [Appellate Division of the] Superior Court. A decision of the
council shall not have value as a precedent for any case initiated [in
Superior Court] pursuant to section 7 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-
6). All proceedings of the council pursuant to this subsection shall
be conducted as expeditiously as possible.

f. The council shall not charge any party a fee in regard to
actions filed with the council. The council shall be subject to the
provisions of the "Open Public Meetings Act," P.L.1975, c.231
(C.10:4-6), except that the council may go into closed session
during that portion of any proceeding during which the contents of a
contested record would be disclosed. A requestor who prevails in
any proceeding shall be entitled to a reasonable attorney's fee.

g. The council shall not have jurisdiction over the Judicial or
Legislative Branches of State Government or any agency, officer, or
employee of those branches.

h. The council shall make available on its website a searchable
index of its opinions.

(cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.8)

8. Section 11 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-10) is amended to
read as follows:

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-
1 et seq.) or any other law to the contrary, the personnel or pension
records of any individual in the possession of a public agency,
including but not limited to records relating to any grievance filed
by or against an individual, shall not be considered a government
record and shall not be made available for public access, except
that:

an individual's name, title, position, educational and training
background, salary, payroll record, length of service, date of
separation and the reason therefor, work address and work
telephone number, job description, and the amount and type of any
pension received shall be a government record;

personnel or pension records of any individual shall be
accessible when required to be disclosed by another law, when
disclosure is essential to the performance of official duties of a
person duly authorized by this State or the United States, or when
authorized by an individual in interest; [and]

records pertaining to the factual basis for the final administrative
determination of a disciplinary action in which an employee is
suspended, demoted, discharged, or resigned not in good standing, if it was due to the conviction of a crime, shall be a government record, except that specific factual details of incidents involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence or rape by or against a public employee, and the identity of the victim of the misconduct alleged, may be deleted or excised if disclosure would violate any individual’s reasonable expectation of privacy so long as the agency provides a statement that such records are being withheld pursuant to this particular exception; records pertaining to settlements of lawsuits or claims involving public agencies, public officials or employees shall be a government record, except that specific factual details of incidents involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence or rape by or against a public employee, and the identity of the victim of the misconduct alleged, may be deleted or excised if disclosure would violate any individual’s reasonable expectation of privacy so long as the agency provides a statement that such records are being withheld pursuant to this particular exception. No public agency shall be liable for damages, pursuant to this subsection, for releasing settlements of lawsuits or claims involving public agencies, public officials or employees, entered into before the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The public agency shall make reasonable efforts to notify the affected parties of the release of the documents; and factual or statistical data contained in information which disclose conformity with specific experiential, educational or medical qualifications required for government employment or for receipt of a public pension, but not including any detailed medical or psychological information, shall be a government record. Nothing in this section exempts disclosure of disciplinary records otherwise required by law to be disclosed or made public, (cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.11) 9. Section 12 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-11) is amended to read as follows: 12. a. A public official, officer, employee or custodian who knowingly and willfully violates P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and supplemented, and is found to have unreasonably grossly negligent by having denied access under the totality of the circumstances, shall be subject to a civil penalty of $1,000 for an initial violation, $2,500 for a second violation that occurs within 10 years of an initial violation, and $5,000 for a third violation that occurs within 10 years of an initial violation. No public official, officer, employee or custodian shall be subject to a civil penalty for any unavailable record that is required by law to be made, maintained or kept on file unless the unavailability of the
This penalty shall be collected and enforced in proceedings in accordance with the "Penalty Enforcement Law of 1999," P.L.1999, c.274 (C.2A:58-10 et seq.), and the rules of court governing actions for the collection of civil penalties. The Superior Court shall have jurisdiction of proceedings for the collection and enforcement of the penalty imposed by this section.

Appropriate disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against a public official, officer, employee or custodian against whom a penalty has been imposed.

For the purposes of this act, P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), "grossly negligent" shall mean engaging in conduct involving a gross deviation from the acceptable standards of conduct from the duties and responsibilities imposed by this act that a reasonable person would have observed in the actor's situation.

(cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.12)

10. Section 14 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-13) is amended to read as follows:

14. The Commissioner of Community Affairs shall include in the annual budget request of the Department of Community Affairs [a] the request submitted by the Government Records Council for sufficient funds to effectuate the purposes of section 8 of P.L.2001, c.404 (C.47:1A-7).

(cf: P.L.2001, c.404, s.14)

11. (New section) Any authority contained herein to exempt records from public access by regulation or Executive Order of the Governor shall be expressly limited to the designation of specific records that are exempt from access pursuant to any exemptions set forth in this act, P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), and shall not be construed as a grant or delegation of authority to exempt records from public access not otherwise exempt by the provisions this act.

12. (New section) a. In exceptional circumstances, and notwithstanding any other law or rule or regulation to the contrary, whenever it is made to appear by verified petition to the Superior Court of the county in which the request for government records was made under P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.), the court may issue a protective order limiting the number and scope of requests a
requestor may make or such other relief as it deems appropriate, including referral of the matter to mediation. The court may issue the protective order if it determines that the requestor has sought records under P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) for an improper purpose, such as to harass or to substantially interfere with the operation of a public agency or its employees. The petition shall be accompanied by a declaration of facts by the public agency withholding the records demonstrating that it has complied with P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) and has made a good faith effort to reach an informal resolution of the issues relating to the records request. The requestor shall have notice and an opportunity to answer the allegations set forth in the petition submitted by the public agency. The public agency shall have the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence. The court’s consideration of a public agency’s petition for relief shall proceed in a summary or expedited manner and shall include a formal hearing whenever the interest of justice so requires.

b. The order specified in subsection a. of this section may limit, or in appropriate circumstances, eliminate, the public agency’s duty to respond to government records requests from the requestor in the future.

c. Upon entry of an order pursuant to this section, the order of the court shall be immediately reviewable by petition to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court. A party shall, in order to obtain review of the order, file a petition within 20 days after service upon him or her of a written notice of entry of the order, or within further time not exceeding an additional 20 days as the court may for good cause allow. If the notice is served by mail, the period within which to file the petition shall be increased by five days. A stay of an order or judgment shall not be granted unless the petitioning party demonstrates that it will otherwise sustain irreparable damage and probable success on the merits. Any person who fails to obey the order of the court shall be cited to show cause why he or she is not in contempt of court.

13. (New section) The Office of Dispute Settlement, in the Office of The Public Defender, shall be available to mediate a dispute over records requests when both requestor and public agency consent thereto. However, mediation shall not alter the responsibility of the custodian to respond and provide documents within the timeframes set forth in this act, P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.).

14. (New section) a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the contrary, the State Treasurer, in consultation with the Chief Technology Officer, shall design and develop, maintain and operate a single, searchable Internet website that is accessible
to the general public without charge for access, and that includes
data or information concerning each of the following:

annual State agency expenditures, as determined by the State
Treasurer and as may be available within the central accounting
system and State payroll system, which shall include but not be
limited to: disbursements by a State agency from funds established
within the State treasury; bond debt services, including amounts of
bond debt or interest paid and sources of funds for bond issues;
salaries and wages including, compensation paid to employees of
State agencies, including current contracts under which
compensation is determined; contractual service purchases,
including amounts paid to vendors; commodity purchases, including
amounts paid to vendors; capital outlay and improvements,
including amounts paid to vendors; aid to local units of government,
including amounts paid to individual units of local government for
aid programs; additional forms of assistance and benefits as
determined by the State Treasurer; and the exact amount of each
such expenditure and the name and address of each individual,
organization, business or other entity receiving such monies;

annual State revenues, as determined by the State Treasurer and
as may be available within the central accounting system, which
shall include but not be limited to: receipts and deposits by a State
agency into funds established within the State treasury; taxes,
including any tax which is payable to or collectible by the Director
of the Division of Taxation in the Department of the Treasury; State
agency earnings, including amounts collected by each State agency
for merchandise sold, services performed, and licenses and permits
issued; revenue derived from the use of money and property,
including amounts received for compensation for the use of State-
owned money and property; gifts, donations, and federal grants,
including amounts received from public and private entities to aid
in support of a specific function or other governmental activity;
other revenue, including receipts not classified elsewhere; and non-
revenue receipts, including all receipts that do not constitute
revenue;

annual State bonded indebtedness, as determined by the State
Treasurer and as may be available within the central accounting
system, which shall include but not be limited to: the amount of the
total original obligation stated in terms of principal and interest; the
term of the obligation; the source of funding for repayment of the
obligation; the amount of principal and interest previously paid to
reduce the obligation; the remaining balance of the obligation; data
or information related to refinancing of the obligation; the cited
statutory or constitutional authority to issue such bonds; the specific
names of firms or individuals serving as bond counsel; and the
names of the banks assisting in the sale of bonds;
annual State liabilities for pension and post-retirement medical
benefits, as determined by the State Treasurer and as may be
available within the central accounting system; and
any other data or information determined to be necessary and
appropriated by the State Treasurer.
b. The Internet website designed and developed, maintained
and operated by the State Treasurer in accordance with this section
shall include all data and information enumerated in subsection a.
of this section for State fiscal year 2013 and each State fiscal year
thereafter. The data and information posted on the Internet website
may be periodically updated, but shall not be subject to removal.
The data and information required to be posted on the Internet
website that is based on or otherwise derived from data or
information made available from the central accounting system or
the State payroll system shall be made available on the Internet
website as soon as practicable, but not later than 45 days after the
last day of the preceding State fiscal year.
The State Treasurer shall not be required to provide data or
information on the Internet website of the kind that is not available
in the central accounting system or the State payroll system on the
date the Internet website is first made available to the public.
The State Treasurer shall be entitled to receive from each State
agency any assistance and information the State Treasurer
determines to be necessary and appropriate to compile the data and
information necessary to design and develop, maintain and operate
the Internet website.
The State Treasurer shall not be required to disclose or otherwise
make available on the Internet website data or information that is
determined by the State Treasurer to be private, personal, or
confidential in accordance with State or federal law, rules, or
regulations.
c. Notwithstanding the provisions of the “Administrative
Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to the
contrary, the State Treasurer may adopt immediately upon filing
with the Office of Administrative Law such rules and regulations as
the State Treasurer determines to be necessary and appropriate to
design and develop, maintain and operate the Internet website and
to compile data and information in accordance with this section,
which rules and regulations shall be effective for a period not to
exceed 360 days following the effective date of
P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) and may
thereafter be amended, adopted, or readopted by the State Treasurer
in accordance with P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).
d. As used in this section:
"Chief Technology Officer" means the person appointed by and
serving at the pleasure of the Governor who is responsible for the
day-to-day operations of the Office of Information Technology in, but not of, the Department of the Treasury; and

“State agency” means any of the principal departments in the Executive Branch of State Government, and any division, board, bureau, office, commission, or other instrumentality within or created by such principal department; the Legislature of the State and any office, board, bureau, or commission within or created by the Legislative Branch of State Government; the Judiciary of the State and any office, board, bureau, or commission within or created by the Judicial Branch of State Government; and any independent State authority, commission, instrumentality, or agency.

15. (New section) a. There is established the New Jersey Local Public Finance Internet Website Development Program.
   b. The program shall be under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Treasury, and shall be administered by the State Treasurer, the Chief Technology Officer, and any clerical, technical, and other professional staff or assistants as may be designated by the State Treasurer from among the personnel appointed and employed by the department.
   c. The purpose of the program shall be to provide advice and technical assistance to units of local government that elect to design and develop, maintain and operate a single, searchable local public finance Internet website that has the capacity to display and retain data and information concerning the unit of local government’s (1) annual expenditures, including, bond debt services and interest, salaries and wages paid to employees, contractual service purchases including amounts paid to vendors, commodity purchases including amounts paid to vendors, capital outlays and improvements including amounts paid to vendors, and aid paid to subunits of the entity; (2) annual revenues, including, revenue derived from the receipts and deposits from any State agency, taxes including compulsory tolls or fees imposed by the public entity for the purpose of financing services, the amounts received as compensation for the use of property owned or used by the public entity, and gifts, donations and federal grants and other sources of revenue not classified elsewhere; (3) total bonded indebtedness, including the amount of the original obligation stated in terms of principal and interest, the terms of the obligation and the source of funding for the repayment thereof, the amounts of principal and interest previously paid to reduce the obligation and the remaining balance of the obligation, the data and information related to refinancing of the obligation, if such refinancing occurred, the statutory or constitutional authority to issue such bonds, the name of the firms or individuals serving as bond counsel, and the name of the banks assisting in the sale of bonds; and (4) outstanding
liabilities for pension and post-retirement medical benefits; and has
the capacity to display and retain public notices, agendas,
schedules, minutes, and other electronic documents required to be
made available in accordance with P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et
seq.).

d. To effectuate the purposes of the program, the State
Treasurer shall:
make and publish guidelines that may be used by local units of
government to identify best practices in the design of a single,
searchable local public finance Internet website;
procure and make available to local units of government a
template and any prewritten or custom computer software that the
State Treasurer determines to be necessary and appropriate to
develop a single, searchable local public finance Internet website;
and
direct the Chief Technology Officer to provide information
technology support and services that may be determined by the
Chief Technology Officer to be necessary and appropriate for a
local unit of government to maintain and operate a single,
searchable local public finance Internet website following its initial
design and development.

e. The State Treasurer shall make an annual report regarding
the implementation and administration of the program.
The report shall identify any guidelines that were made and
published by the State Treasurer during the year immediately
preceding the year in which the report is required to be made.
The report shall identify any templates and any prewritten or
custom computer software that the State Treasurer determined to be
necessary and appropriate to develop a single, searchable local
public finance Internet website during the year immediately
preceding the year in which the report is required to be made.
The report shall identify the information technology support and
services provided by the Chief Technology Officer and any other
clerical, technical, and other professional staff or assistants to each
unit of local government that maintains and operates a single,
searchable local public finance Internet website during the year
immediately preceding the year in which the report is required to be
made.
The report shall identify each local unit of government that used
the guidelines, templates and software, or the information
technology support and services made available through the
program to design and develop, maintain and operate a single,
searchable local public finance Internet website during the year
immediately preceding the year in which the report is required to be
made.
The report shall include any findings or recommendations that
may be made by the State to improve the effectiveness of the
program during the year immediately preceding the year in which
the report is required to be made.

The State Treasurer shall file the report required to be made in
accordance with this section with the Governor and the Legislature,
in accordance with section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on
or before October 1, 2013 and on or before October 1 each year
thereafter.

f. Notwithstanding the provisions of the “Administrative
Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to the
contrary, the State Treasurer may adopt immediately upon filing
with the Office of Administrative Law such rules and regulations as
the State Treasurer determines to be necessary and appropriate to
effectuate the purposes of the program established in accordance
with this section, which rules and regulations shall be effective for a
period not to exceed 360 days following the effective date of
P.L.  , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) and may
thereafter be amended, adopted, or readopted by the State Treasurer
in accordance with P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

g. As used in this section:
"Chief Technology Officer" means the person appointed by and
serving at the pleasure of the Governor who is responsible for the
day-to-day operations of the Office of Information Technology in,
but not of, the Department of the Treasury; and
“Local unit of government” includes a county, municipality,
local authority, school board, or other local instrumentality of the
State and any public agency or agency as defined by section 1 of
P.L.1995, c.23 (C.47:1A-1.1).

16. (New section) There is appropriated from the General Fund
to the Department of the Treasury such sums as may be necessary,
but not to exceed $100,000, as shall be determined by the Director
of the Division of Budget and Accounting in the Department of the
Treasury, to effectuate the purposes of the program established in
accordance with section 15 of P.L.  , c. (C. ) (pending before
the Legislature as this bill).

17. This bill shall take effect 120 days following enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill revises the open public records act (OPRA). The bill
formally names OPRA as the “Martin O’Shea Open Public Records
Act” in honor of Martin O’Shea, a tireless advocate for broad public
access to government records. The bill expands and clarifies various
definitions and makes changes to the duties of record custodians
and the Government Records Council. It also revises the
composition of the Government Records Council and changes the
council from being in the Department of Community Affairs to
being in, but not of, the Department of Community Affairs. It
modifies the mediation process making the Office of Dispute
Settlement in the Office of the Public Defender available to mediate
disputes, changes the penalty provisions, and modifies access to the
courts. It specifies that the fines imposed pursuant to OPRA cannot
be paid out of public funds. The bill changes the public
membership of the Government Records Council to six public
members and the president of the Municipal Clerks Association of
New Jersey.

In addition, the bill requires the State to create a public finance
website and establish the New Jersey Local Public Finance Internet
Website Development Program to provide advice and technical
assistance to units of local government that elect to create a
searchable local public finance Internet website.