



## The Nevada Policy Research Institute

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### **NPRI Calls for Open-Meeting Law Compliance, Raises Possibility of Pursuing Legal Action**

LAS VEGAS — The Nevada Policy Research Institute — host of the transparency-in-Nevada-government website service, [TransparentNevada.com](http://TransparentNevada.com) — today called on Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto to fully and faithfully enforce Nevada’s open-meeting laws.

“We are seeing more and more cases in which public bodies show complete disregard for their legal obligation to conduct the people’s business in full view of the people,” said Andy Matthews, NPRI’s vice president for operations and communications. “Even more disturbing, however, is the fact that Attorney General Masto, who bears responsibility for ensuring compliance with Nevada’s open-meeting laws, has shown a consistent lack of interest in protecting Nevada’s citizens by enforcing those laws.”

In response to the attorney general’s clearly discernible reluctance to enforce existing law, said Matthews, [TransparentNevada](http://TransparentNevada.com) will itself facilitate public-interest litigation in suitable cases. Members of the public are being encouraged to go to the front page of [TransparentNevada.com](http://TransparentNevada.com), click on the notice at the upper right, and report violations of the state open-meeting and open-records laws to the Institute for review.

“Nevadans have a right, as a matter not just of principle but also of law, to know how their elected officials are conducting public business,” said Matthews. “The attorney general’s office may not take that right seriously, but we at NPRI do, and we are committed to exploring any and all avenues in order to see that it is upheld.”

NPRI has itself filed two open-meeting complaints with the attorney general’s office, but sees the roster of open-meeting law violators increasing, including:

- The Henderson City Council, which has tallied a lengthy list of open-meeting law violations, most recently a June 15, 2010 episode in which the council, led by

City Manager Mark Calhoun and Mayor Andy Hafen, attempted to prevent members of the public from speaking about a published agenda item.

- The Clark County School District, which in 2008 placed an item on the school board agenda and then refused to provide the public with relevant informational material that Superintendent Walt Rulffes had shared with trustees.

Matthews noted that in both of these cases of open-meeting law violations, as in others, Attorney General Masto failed to take the necessary action to force compliance with the law. Matthews also said that research conducted by NPRI revealed that between 2007 and 2009, Masto's office exhausted one or both statutes of limitations for enforcement in a staggering 77 percent of the 89 complaints that were filed within one month of an alleged violation.

“Given the numerous challenges that Nevada is now facing, on the economic and fiscal fronts, in education and in many other areas, it is more critical than ever that Nevada's public servants be held accountable for their actions,” Matthews said. “Unfortunately, we are seeing a disturbing trend whereby our public officials seem to believe they are entitled to play by their own rules, flaunt the law and ignore the rights of the people. It is time for this arrogance to stop.”

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