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FLOOR DEBATE

March 28, 2006 LB 898

Committee for public hearing. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments pending, Mr. President. (AM2116, Legislative Journal page 718.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Preister, you're recognized to open on LB 898.

SENATOR PREISTER: Thank you, Honorable President, friends all. Good morning. The purpose of LB 898 is to address concerns raised by citizens from across the state. These concerns include violations of the open meetings and public records provisions by a wide variety of public agencies, including, but not limited to, school boards, county boards, public power districts, local utilities, and other public bodies. This bill was drafted after an open meetings and public records working group met every three to four weeks throughout the summer and fall. You've got a handout on your desk that I've provided that shows the list of all the people who were invited to these meetings, a time line for the meetings, and the attendance numbers at those meetings that we held over the summer. The list of invitees includes citizens and lobbyists who have testified at bill or interim study hearings, and people who have contacted my office expressing interest in the issue. The people on the mailing list were sent notices and minutes of each meeting. The list included approximately equal numbers of citizens and representatives of public agencies or other statewide entities active on issues related to public access to information. The meetings of the working group were attended by 11 to 20 people at each meeting, which included, generally, an equal number of citizens' representatives, and lobbyist representatives of various public bodies and other interested statewide organizations. LB 898 has been narrowed to four areas. There are two provisions regarding closed session. The motion to go into closed session must contain the subject matter and reason requiring the closed session; and, prior to going into that closed session, the presiding officer must restate on the record the limitation of the subject matter that may be discussed in closed session. Second, agendas must contain more specific information about the issues that will be discussed and/or acted upon. Third, public bodies must post at least one copy of the Open Meetings Act at an accessible location for the