

## **Our Views: Learn about your rights**

Advocate Opinion page staff  
Published: Mar 26, 2010 - Page: 8B

Louisiana's Open Meetings Law and Public Records Law often are used by members of the media, but these laws are not merely tools for journalists covering government. The laws guarantee all people access to documents and meetings involved in making government decisions.

That's why it's important for the public and government officials to have a basic understanding of how the Open Meetings Law and Public Records Law work. We applaud the work that the Public Affairs Research Council, commonly called PAR, has done over the years in explaining these laws in a clear and simple way to the public.

PAR, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group that studies state issues, has extended that tradition of public advocacy by making fact sheets about the Louisiana Open Meetings Law and the Public Records Law available for free online at <http://www.la-par.org>.

The fact sheets offer plain-language explanations of the state's government transparency laws — often called “sunshine laws” — with practical tips on how the public can participate in open meetings and request public records.

PAR released the fact sheets in conjunction with Sunshine Week, a recent nationwide observance aimed at highlighting the importance of transparent government.

If representative government is to work well, of course, then every week should be Sunshine Week.

With that in mind, we urge everyone to take advantage of PAR's helpful guides to the public's rights concerning documents generated by state and local governments in Louisiana, and the public's rights involving meetings by public bodies in the state.

Only in vigorously exercising these rights can we protect them, and the cause of government accountability.