

What is the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB)?



Editor's Note: This is a monthly column prepared by the Iowa Public Information Board to update Iowans on the IPIB's activities and provide information on some of the issues routinely addressed by the board.

QUESTION: What are the powers and duties of the IPIB?

ANSWER: The IPIB is an independent agent authorized by statute (Iowa Code chapter 23) to issue advice, or declaratory orders with the force of law, regarding the applicability of the open meetings (Chapter 21) and open records (Chapter 22) laws.

It can receive and investigate complaints alleging violations of the laws and seek resolution through an informal process. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, and the IPIB has probable cause to believe the law has been violated, the board may prosecute the government body or official in a contested-case proceeding under the Administrative Procedures Act (Chapter 17A). The IPIB can issue subpoenas to investigate complaints and prosecute cases, and it can also issue orders with the force of law to require compliance with

the sunshine laws.

The IPIB also offers training in Chapters 21 and 22 to government bodies, disseminates information to the public, submits an annual report to the Governor and Legislature and makes recommendations relating to access to government information.

QUESTION: What are the limits of the IPIB jurisdiction?

ANSWER: The IPIB does not have jurisdiction over the judicial or legislative branches, or over the Governor and Governor's office. A complaint must be filed with 60 days from the time the alleged violation occurred or the complainant could have become aware of the violation with reasonable diligence.

QUESTION: Do I have to file a public meetings or records complaint with the IPIB instead of going to court? If I file a complaint

with the board and am dissatisfied with the result, can I appeal?

ANSWER: Any person, the Attorney General or a County Attorney seeking to enforce open meetings and records laws can bring the complaint before the IPIB, or the individual can bring an action in state district court, as under current law. If more than one party simultaneously brings an action before the IPIB and in court, the court shall stay the case pending resolution of the complaint by the IPIB. A final IPIB order is subject to judicial review.

QUESTION: Where can I find out more information about the IPIB?

ANSWER: The IPIB has a website: www.ipib.iowa.gov. You can also contact the IPIB staff by phone at 515.725.1781, by fax at 515.725.1789 or by email at IPIB@iowa.gov.

IPIB Facts and Figures

During the month of February 2015, 61 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

TYPE	FEBRUARY 2015	JAN-FEB 2015
Formal complaints	7	13
Formal opinions	0	1
Declaratory orders	0	0
Informal complaints	17	27
Informal requests	35	84
Misc.	2	5
TOTAL:	61	130