Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 7

Chairperson: **Ray Aguilar**
Committee: **Government, Military and Veterans Affairs**
Date of Hearing: **January 18, 2007**

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 7 clarifies the Open Meetings Act regarding citizen testimony. It makes the following clarifications:

1. No public body may require a member of the public to ask to be placed on the agenda in order to address the body regarding agenda items or any new business;

2. Members of a public body may engage in discussion with citizens who address the body during new business. No action may be taken on the issue discussed that would require a vote of the body at that meeting.

These changes are being offered in order re-affirm the authority of public bodies to adopt and enforce reasonable rules regarding the conduct of persons who wish to testify during public meetings. However, LB 7 clarifies that in setting these rules, no additional no burdens may be placed on citizens which would require them to first request to be placed on the agenda in order to address the public body on an agenda item or in order to address the body during "New Business".

Both the Legislature and the Courts have stated that the goal of the Open Meetings Act is obtain the objective of openness in favor of the public. A door closes on open government if citizens have a right to attend meetings but must go to extraordinary means in order to address matters being considered by a public body.

The vast majority of political subdivisions have continued their practice of open public comment which has served the public and governing bodies well. This process has allowed a free flow of information and participatory democracy which are the backbone of government at local, state and federal levels. LB 7 would assure that all political subdivisions continue this open, participatory process.

Principal Introducer: _____

        Senator Don Preister