

1 S.218

2 Introduced by Senators Brock, Collamore, Ingalls, Parent and Terenzini

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: General provisions; common law; general rights; Open Meeting Law;

6 right to attend meetings

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to amend the
8 Open Meeting Law to expressly state that the public bodies of the State and its
9 political subdivisions shall not prohibit or discourage the participation of a
10 person or group of persons based on race or other classification.

11 An act relating to prohibiting public bodies from discouraging public
12 participation based on race

13 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

14 Sec. 1. INTENT AND PURPOSE

15 (a) Vermont's Open Meeting Law was enacted with the purpose of
16 declaring all meetings of public bodies open to the public, without
17 consideration of the class or status of those who choose to attend and
18 participate. The Open Meeting Law embraces the notion that public bodies
19 exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business and are therefore
20 accountable to the people. Vermont requires every public body of the State

1 and its political subdivisions to provide the opportunity for the people of
2 Vermont to attend and participate in open meetings. The right to attend public
3 meetings is provided to all people and is subject to constitutional guarantees of
4 equal protection under the law. Accordingly, public bodies should not use the
5 voice of government to discourage, hinder, or prohibit the attendance of any
6 person or group of persons based on their race or other suspect classification.

7 (b) The General Assembly intends to ensure that no public body of the
8 State or its political subdivisions segregates or excludes persons based on race.
9 Accordingly, the purpose of this act is to amend the Open Meeting Law to
10 expressly state that public participation in the meetings of public bodies shall
11 not be discouraged or prohibited on the basis of race.

12 Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. § 312 is amended to read:

13 § 312. RIGHT TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF PUBLIC AGENCIES

14 * * *

15 (h)(1) At an open meeting, the public shall be given a reasonable
16 opportunity to express its opinion on matters considered by the public body
17 during the meeting, ~~as long as~~ provided order is maintained. Public comment
18 shall be subject to reasonable rules established by the chairperson. This
19 subsection shall not apply to quasi-judicial proceedings.

