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**New Jersey Legislature to Hear Bills to Gut Open Public Records Act
In a Fast Track Attempt to Reduce Government Transparency**

Shrewsbury: The League of Women Voters of Monmouth County (LWVMonmouth) will be going to Trenton on Monday, March 11, along with other civic organizations and individuals to testify against S2930/A4045. These bills, announced to be heard just one week ago, attempt to weaken the protections citizens have enjoyed for over 20 years with the passage of the historic Open Public Records Act.

The League encourages all residents to contact their state legislators and ask them to vote against these bills which do not serve the public welfare. [Visit the New Jersey State Legislature website](#) to contact your legislator and urge them to vote “No on S2930/A4045.”

LWV Monmouth Co-President Evelyn C Murphy states, “These bills gut numerous vital provisions to OPRA making it more difficult for the public to receive government records and to appeal improper decisions. Public records requests are already denied with too much frequency and these bills will make it worse.”

She adds, “The legislature has also scheduled both hearings (at the Senate and Assembly) simultaneously apparently to divide the testimony of many groups who are opposed to its intention, and ironically during National Sunshine Week, which celebrates the fundamental role of transparency in a free society.”

LWV Monmouth Co-President Sharon Steinhorn warns, “If this passes out of both committees it could be heard on the floor as early as March 18.”

Several ways the bills will weaken transparency include:

- Exempts email and call logs, while also making it incredibly difficult to request any emails at all.

- Guts fee-shifting, making it difficult for the public and even the media to sue to gain access to records. Without it, many important investigations into government corruption would not have been possible.
- Sets up additional unnecessary hurdles for the public to request documents or receive them in their requested formats.
- Creates a vague and subjective “harassment” loophole that will lead to unreasonable redactions and request denials.
- Establishes an unbalanced task force charged with examining public access to police records without meaningful community or stakeholder engagement.

Overall, this legislation is particularly troubling in light of the Legislature’s passage last session of the Elections Transparency Act. That Orwellian-named bill opened the floodgates to dark money interests spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in key legislative races to mislead voters in elections less than six months ago.

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.