

Committee on Judiciary

CS/CS/HB 655 — Pub. Rec. and Pub. Meetings/Attorney Meetings to Discuss Private Property Rights Claims

by Government Operations Subcommittee; Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee; and Reps. Duggan, Daley, and others (CS/CS/SB 332 by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee; Judiciary Committee; and Senator Bradley)

The bill creates a public meetings exemption to allow an agency to meet privately with its attorney to review a claim made against the government pursuant to the Bert J. Harris, Jr., Property Rights Protection Act. The bill also creates a public records exemption for the transcript, recordings, minutes, and records generated during an exempt portion of such meeting. Once the claim is resolved or has expired, the records of the meeting will be accessible to the public.

The Bert Harris Act creates a means for a landowner to seek compensation in certain instances where a local government entity has taken an action that has reduced the fair market value of the land. A claimant must make a claim before filing a lawsuit and the local government must respond to the claim. Under current law, the meeting among government officials and their attorney to discuss a Bert Harris claim and determine potential settlement offers must be open to the public. However, similar meetings of a public body to discuss lawsuit strategies and settlement offers are closed to the public during the course of the lawsuit but the meeting records become accessible when the litigation is concluded.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0