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LAW ALERT

New Law Mandates Training for All Board Members

August 29, 2011

On August 23, 2011, Governor Quinn signed into law Public Act 97-504 (the "Act"), which amends the Open Meetings Act ("OMA") by requiring all elected and appointed members of a public body to successfully complete training curriculum developed and administered by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor ("PAC")[1] *or* by participating in a course sponsored or conducted by an organization created under Article 23 of the School Code (*i.e.*, Illinois Association of School Boards). A certificate of completion must be filed with the public body for each board member. The Act becomes effective on January 1, 2012.

In accordance with the amendments to the OMA, existing members as of January 1, 2012, must complete the training by January 1, 2013. Those members who are elected or appointed after January 1, 2012, must complete the training within 90 days of taking the oath of office or assuming responsibilities as a member of the public body. Failure to complete the training will not invalidate any action taken by the public body.

It is not yet clear whether the PAC will develop a separate electronic training program specifically for board members or if it will simply use the training program that presently exists for OMA designees. We encourage all board members to check the AG's website after January 1, 2012.

If you require additional information regarding the new requirements under the OMA, please do not hesitate to contact any RSNLT attorney.

Catherine R. Locallo, an associate in the firm's Chicago office, prepared this *Law Alert*.

[1] As you know, the OMA currently requires a public body to "designate employees, officers, or members to receive training on compliance with the OMA, and register with the PAC". 5 ILCS 120/1.05(a). The training is free and available on the Illinois Attorney General's ("AG") website.

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