

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2495

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government Operations & Accountability

Title: An act relating to establishing a state government efficiency hotline.

Brief Description: Establishing a state government efficiency hotline.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilmer, Holmquist, Green, Miloscia, Buri, Nixon, Rodne, Hudgins, P. Sullivan, Springer, Haler, Morrell, Morris, Ericks, B. Sullivan, Simpson and Upthegrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 1/27/06, 1/30/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a State Government Efficiency Hotline.
- Establishes the powers and duties of the State Auditor to manage and operate the hotline.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Miloscia, Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Kasa Tupua (786-7291).

Background:

The State Auditor (Auditor) is an elected official in the executive branch of the state government. Statute specifies numerous duties and responsibilities for the Auditor, including auditing public accounts in state agencies and local governments, and investigating improper governmental activity.

In the November 2005 general election, the passage of Initiative 900 expanded the Auditor's duties and responsibilities. The initiative authorizes the Auditor to conduct independent performance audits of all state and local governments on behalf of the citizens. Among the

Auditor's responsibilities include the authorization to contract out any performance audits and submitting an official annual report of recommendations by July 1.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

State Government Efficiency Hotline

Within existing funds, the State Auditor (Auditor) must establish a State Government Efficiency Hotline (hotline) to allow members of the public and public employees to recommend improvements for efficiency, and to report waste, inefficiency or abuse by state agencies, state employees, or persons under contract with state agencies.

State Auditor: Powers and Duties

The Auditor is directed to:

- prepare and publicize information regarding the purpose of the hotline;
- designate staff to process recommendations;
- conduct an initial review of each report and determine which reports require further investigation;
- ensure the identity of a person making a report through the hotline or by e-mail on the Auditor's website remains confidential until the investigation is complete, unless the person making a report consents to disclosure by written waiver;
- prepare a written determination of the results of the investigation, and report publicly the conclusions of each investigation and recommend ways to improve efficiency and correct any deficiency; and
- submit an annual overview and update of hotline investigations, including the results achieved, to the Legislature and to the appropriate legislative committees.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Provides more discretion to the Auditor to manage the hotline, and modifies the confidentiality provision to ensure the identity of a person making a report through the hotline or by e-mail through the state auditor's website is confidential at all times unless the person making the report consents to disclosure by written waiver

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Government Efficiency Hotline is another method to ensure that government works better. It is important to allow the public to be the Legislature's feet on the street, and providing the public with an avenue to do so will help government save money and

be more efficient. The hotline is modeled after the program in Oregon, and should not cost much to establish or require additional staff time to operate.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kilmer, prime sponsor; and Brian Sontag, State Auditor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.