

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1739

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to the citizen suggestion program.

Brief Description: Creating the citizen suggestion program.

Sponsors: Representatives Finkbeiner, Dyer, Heavey, Quall, Cothorn, Johanson, Springer, Brumsickle, Schoesler, Dunshee, H. Myers, Sheldon, Romero, Pruitt, G. Fisher, Orr, Roland, Lemmon and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, March 3, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King; and Pruitt.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: The state's Productivity Board is charged with providing an employee suggestion program to encourage and reward suggestions by state employees that promote efficiency and economy in state government.

A cash award for such a suggestion is to be 10 percent of the net savings, but not more than \$10,000. The board sets guidelines for making cash awards for suggestions for which benefits to the state are intangible or for which benefits cannot be calculated. Funds for the awards are to be drawn from the appropriation of the agency benefiting from the suggestion. An award may not be made to an elected state official or a state agency director. It is not normally to be made to an employee for a suggestion which is within the scope of the employee's regularly assigned responsibilities. A cash award may not be made to a confidential secretary or administrative assistant in the immediate office of an elected state official.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Beginning January 1, 1994, the Productivity Board must administer a citizen suggestion program. Cash awards are to be made for these suggestions using the same criteria which apply under current law for state employee suggestions. No award may be made to a person who owns, is employed by, or is acting as an agent for a business that will receive a financial benefit if the citizen's suggestion were implemented.

If the board decides not to grant an award for a citizen's suggestion or if it decides to grant an award that the citizen believes to be inadequate, the citizen or the citizen's representative may request the board to reconsider its decision. The request must be filed with the board within 30 days of its decision. After such a reconsideration, a determination of the board is final.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill delays the implementation of the Citizen Award Program until January 1, 1994; and provides the procedure for requesting the board to reconsider its decision regarding a citizen's suggestion.

Fiscal Note: Requested on substitute March 3, 1993.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Employee Suggestion Program has saved the state over \$24 million. A program expanded to include citizen suggestions in Texas has saved that state over \$200 million.

Testimony Against: (1) This is not a free program; funding for the award payments must be examined carefully. This program has worked in one state that tried it, but has failed in two others. (2) The Department of Transportation has one full-time employee who is assigned to employee suggestions and is barely keeping up with the workload. The bill should contain an appropriation to provide assistance in processing these additional, citizen suggestions.

Witnesses: Representative Finkbeiner (in favor); Ralph Munro, Secretary of State (in favor); and Tom Kuchman, Department of Transportation (opposed).