

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1739

As Passed House
March 15, 1993

Title: An act relating to the citizen suggestion program.

Brief Description: Creating the citizen suggestion program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by 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;
Appropriations, March 6, 1993, DPS(SG-A APP);
Passed House, March 15, 1993, 97-0.

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).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on State Government be substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Appropriations do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dunshee; Jacobsen; Leonard; Linville; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Sommers; Stevens; Talcott; Wang; and Wolfe.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7130).

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 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.

Unless funding is provided specifically for this program in the omnibus appropriations act, this program is null and void.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (State Government) 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.

(Appropriations) The Employee Suggestion Program has saved the state a lot of money. Citizens' suggestions programs are being tried with varying success in other states.

Testimony Against: (State Government) (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.

(Appropriations) None.

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

(Appropriations) Linda Mackintosh, Productivity Board (supports).