

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2495

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As of February 17, 2006

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

**Brief Description:** Establishing a state government efficiency hotline.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability (originally sponsored by Representatives Kilmer, Holmquist, Green, Miloscia, Buri, Nixon, Rodne, Hudgins, P. Sullivan, Springer, Haler, Morrell, Morris, Ericks, B. Sullivan, Simpson and Upthegrove).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/10/06, 98-0.

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/20/06.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**Background:** During the 2005 session, the Legislature passed ESHB 1064, Improving Government Performance and Accountability. The bill created the Citizen Advisory Board (Board) to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in state government, and to work with the auditor in the conduct of performance audits. The voting members of the Board are its citizen-members. In addition to establishing criteria for performance audits, the Board is directed to conduct a statewide performance review as a precursor to a performance audit work plan.

At the last general election, the voters of this state approved Initiative 900. The Initiative authorizes the State Auditor to conduct independent, comprehensive performance audits of state and local governments and each of its agencies, accounts, and programs, as well as the judicial and legislative branches of government. Citizen-involvement is not institutionalized in the Initiative.

The Initiative does not repeal any of the provisions of ESHB 1064, so both must be followed to the extent that there are no conflicts. Coordinating these provisions is a subject of legislation in this session.

State employees are protected by the State Whistleblower Act when they report improper governmental action to the State Auditor. Improper governmental action is any action by a state employee that is a gross waste of public funds or resources; is in violation of federal or state law or rule; or is a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety.

**Summary of Bill:** Within existing funds, the state auditor must establish a toll-free telephone number for use by the public and by public employees as follows: 1) to report recommendations for improving the efficiency of state government, and 2) to report waste,

inefficiency, and abuse by state agencies, state employees, and persons under contract with state agencies.

The State Auditor must publicize this hotline and provide staffing. The State Auditor must conduct an initial interview of every recommendation and report. The State Auditor decides which reports require further investigation and makes a public, written report of the results of the investigations and the subsequent conclusions and recommendations. The State Auditor must report to the Legislature annually on the results of the program.

The identities of the persons reporting on the hotline or on the State Auditor's web site are kept confidential.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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