

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6669

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As of March 1, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to consolidating business assistance programs and services.

**Brief Description:** Consolidating business assistance programs and services.

**Sponsors:** Senators Brown and Braun.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 3/02/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Julie Murray (786-7711)

**Background:** The Legislature created the Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) in the Office of Financial Management (OFM) in 2002 to help improve the regulatory system and assist citizens, businesses and project proponents by providing information and assistance on the regulatory process. ORA duties include providing information on best permitting practices and permit processing times; assisting with fully coordinated permit processes; maintaining a permit handbook; and working to improve environmental and business regulatory processes

The mission of the Department of Commerce (Commerce) is to streamline access to business assistance and economic development services by providing them through sector-based, cluster-based, and regional partners. In addition, Commerce strives to diversify the state's economy, provide greater access to economic opportunity, stimulate private sector investment and entrepreneurship, and provide stable family-wage jobs.

A business regulatory efficiency program administered by Commerce was established in 2013. Commerce and ORA are authorized to conduct one or more annual multi-jurisdictional regulatory streamlining projects, beginning with the manufacturing sector. Upon completion of a streamlining project, the Department must document and distribute the streamlined laws, rules, and processes to the Association of Washington Cities and Washington State Association of Counties for distribution to their members.

**Summary of Bill:** The ORA name is changed to the Office of Regulatory Innovation and Assistance (ORIA). Effective July 1, 2016, ORIA is transferred from OFM to Commerce

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and made a program within Commerce. The requirement that the Governor appoint a Director for ORIA is removed. The bargaining rights of all classified employees are not affected by the transfer.

The ORIA must develop a long-term strategy for identifying and prioritizing multiagency regulatory processes that can be streamlined through better coordination. The strategy must be based on industry needs developed in collaboration with businesses. The ORIA must develop a timetable by January 1, 2017 for the prioritized regulatory processes to be streamlined. The ORIA must provide progress reports annually to the Governor and the Legislature.

Commerce must develop business assistance materials to provide information about Washington's business and regulatory requirements and efforts to streamline government regulations. Business assistance efforts must be prioritized by collaborating with businesses in key industry sectors, including sectors participating in regulatory streamlining pilot projects.

Commerce must track the amount of federal economic development funding received and disbursed, along with any required matching amounts, and provide an annual report to the economic development committees in the Legislature. Commerce must coordinate with federal and state public research facilities to leverage federal funds coming to the state for research, development, innovation of new technologies, and transfer of technology to the private sector to promote business development and jobs in Washington.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2016.