
HOUSE BILL 2550

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Representatives Dunshee, Haigh, Miloscia, Cody, Scott, Ogden, Linville, Anderson, Conway, Schual-Berke, Constantine, Lantz, Kenney, Edmonds, Cooper, Eickmeyer, Murray, Morris, Keiser, Stensen, Santos, Rockefeller, Romero, Wood, O'Brien, Kagi, Hurst and Kessler

Read first time 01/17/2000. Referred to Committee on State Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the Washington answers! program; adding
2 a new chapter to Title 43 RCW; and making an appropriation.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature believes that one of the
5 most important responsibilities of the Washington state government is
6 to provide quick, accurate, and courteous information to Washington
7 citizens. The governor has also made customer service a priority by
8 including it in performance contracts with agency directors.
9 Washington citizens use various means to access information and
10 services including the telephone, the internet, the postal service, and
11 office visits. The Washington answers! program is intended to focus on
12 improving the ability of agencies to provide quick, courteous, and
13 accurate information to Washington citizens.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Unless the context clearly requires
15 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this
16 chapter.

17 (1) "Account" means the Washington answers! account in the state
18 treasury.

1 (2) "Agency" means an office, department, board, commission, or
2 other separate unit or division, however designated, in the state
3 government.

4 (3) "Director" means the director of financial management.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington answers! account is
6 created in the state treasury. Moneys in the account may be used only
7 in a manner consistent with this chapter. Moneys deposited in the
8 account shall be administered by the director and subject to
9 legislative appropriation.

10 (2) The director may use or permit the use of any moneys in the
11 account to make grants to agencies for the purpose of improving the
12 ability of agencies to provide quick, courteous, and accurate
13 information to Washington citizens. No more than three percent of the
14 moneys deposited in the account may be used by the director to pay for
15 the administration of the grant program authorized by this chapter.

16 (3) An agency applying for grants shall submit a written proposal
17 to the director. The proposal must include a description of how the
18 agency will use the grant and other information relevant to the
19 director's consideration of the agency's proposal under section 4 of
20 this act.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** When making a grant under this chapter, the
22 director shall consider the extent to which the applicant agency's
23 proposal:

24 (1) Contains initiatives that will result in long-term improvement
25 in customer service;

26 (2) Utilizes technology to improve and expand the avenues for
27 citizens to access information from the agency;

28 (3) Reduces the time within which the agency responds to citizen
29 requests;

30 (4) Reduces telephone wait times for citizens calling for agency
31 assistance;

32 (5) Improves call centers to get information to callers more
33 quickly;

34 (6) Improves the agency's use of toll-free telephone numbers;

35 (7) Demonstrates the agency's need to improve telephone service;

36 (8) Uses electronic filing, electronic forms, and electronic
37 commerce to improve customer service;

- 1 (9) Improves efficiency in collecting and utilizing state revenues;
- 2 (10) Creates new efficiencies; and
- 3 (11) Reduces the number of full-time employees within the agency.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** An agency receiving a grant under this
5 chapter shall:

6 (1) Monitor wait times for citizens contacting the agency and the
7 time within which the agency responds to citizen requests;

8 (2) Provide an opportunity for citizens to leave messages in the
9 event that wait times are too long; and

10 (3) Provide an annual report on the results of the grant to the
11 legislature, the governor, and the director on or before December 1st
12 in each of the five years following receipt of the grant. The report
13 must contain the following information:

14 (a) The average wait time for citizens contacting the agency during
15 the preceding calendar year;

16 (b) The number of dropped telephone calls during the preceding
17 calendar year;

18 (c) The availability of more effective customer service technology;

19 (d) The average time within which the agency responded to citizen
20 requests during the preceding calendar year;

21 (e) A timetable of targets for meaningful reductions in citizen
22 wait time; and

23 (f) Beginning in the second year following the grant, a comparison
24 of the information from previous years.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The director shall conduct an annual random
26 survey of published agency access numbers. The survey must include
27 agencies with high volumes of citizen contact during the preceding
28 calendar year. The director shall report the results of the survey to
29 the legislature and the governor on or before December 1st of each
30 year. The survey must include the following information for each
31 agency:

32 (1) The number of times, if any, that the agency could not be
33 contacted through the published agency access number;

34 (2) The responsiveness of the published agency access number;

35 (3) The average amount of wait time; and

36 (4) The availability of knowledgeable agency staff to answer
37 citizen questions.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** The director shall make available to other
2 agencies any innovative actions that the director discovers while
3 administering this chapter that may improve an agency's ability to
4 provide quick, courteous, and accurate information to Washington
5 citizens.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** The sum of one million dollars, or as much
7 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending
8 June 30, 2001, from the general fund to the Washington answers! account
9 for the purposes of this act.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** Sections 1 through 7 of this act constitute
11 a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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