

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1503

As Passed House:

March 15, 2003

Title: An act relating to performance audits of the judicial branch.

Brief Description: Encouraging the office of the administrator for the courts to conduct performance audits.

Sponsors: By Representatives Miloscia, O'Brien, Haigh, Lantz, Lovick, Moeller, Upthegrove and Anderson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/11/03, 2/13/03 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/25/03, 2/26/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/15/03, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Encourages the Office of the Administrator for the Courts to conduct performance audits of courts.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; Carrell, Ranking Minority Member; McMahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell, Flannigan, Kirby, Lovick and Newhouse.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Boldt, Cody, Conway, Cox, DeBolt, Dunshee, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Miloscia, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Clements.

Staff: Holly Lynde (786-7153).

Background:

A number of programs have been instituted across state government to improve government efficiency and accountability.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) conducts performance audits, performance reviews, sunset reviews and other studies as directed by the Legislature. In addition the JLARC develops a biennial performance audit work plan that identifies state agency programs for evaluation. "Performance audit" as defined for the purposes of the JLARC's responsibilities means an objective and systematic assessment to help improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. Performance audits include measuring whether resources are being economically and efficiently used and whether or not desired outcomes and results are being achieved, and the causes of failure to meet efficiency and outcome goals.

The State Auditor conducts financial audits and is authorized to perform or participate in performance verifications and performance audits as authorized by the Legislature in the omnibus biennial appropriations acts or in the performance audit work plan approved by the JLARC. The Office of Financial Management provides professional and technical assistance to assist state agencies in the development of strategic plans that include the mission of the agency and its programs, measurable goals, strategies, and performance measurement systems. Under executive order, all state agencies are to develop and implement programs to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of public services they provide using quality improvement, business process redesign, employee involvement, and other quality improvement techniques.

The Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) is charged with administering various aspects of the state court system. One of the duties of the OAC is to examine the administrative methods and systems employed in the offices of the judges, clerks and other court employees and make recommendations for the improvement of these court methods and systems.

Summary of Bill:

The OAC is encouraged to conduct performance audits of courts in accordance with criteria and methods developed by the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA). The BJA is encouraged to consider quality improvement programs, audits, and scoring. The OAC is encouraged to submit the results of the audits to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and any applicable boards or committees established under the authority of the Supreme

Court.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Judiciary) Performance audits provide a means for the courts to systematically take a look at themselves to enhance efficiency and public accountability. One of the duties of the OAC is to examine the administration and operation of the courts and recommend improvements. The courts support accountability and have already been doing this through engaging in performance audits, the creation of a best practices committee and the proposal of a court rule on this issue.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) Over the past six years, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) has developed criteria to measure the performance of trial courts throughout the state. One of the responsibilities under the supervision of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is to examine the administrative methods and systems used by employees of the court and to make recommendations for improvement. The courts have been working over the past several years to develop a court rule to initiate performance audits. The OAC currently performs audits at the request of local courts or when an issue is brought before the Board of Judicial Administration. This bill allows the OAC to conduct more than one or two audits per biennium. The bill also places in statute a clear responsibility to conduct these performance audits rather than the general language in the OAC's statute that they will review performance of courts.

Testimony Against: (Judiciary) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Judiciary) Representative Miloscia, prime sponsor; Mary McQueen, Office of the Administrator for the Courts; and Jeff Hall, Board for Judicial Administration.

Testified: (Appropriations) Mary McQueen, Administrator for the Courts.