

Government Oversight Committee
(Joint Legislative Committee on Program Evaluation
and Government Accountability)

Meeting Summary
July, 18, 2005

CALL TO ORDER

The Co-chair, Sen. Gagnon, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:50 a.m. in the Labor Committee Room.

ATTENDANCE

Senators: Sen. Gagnon, Sen. Dow, Sen. Courtney, Sen. Raye
Absent: Sen. Mitchell, Sen. Perry

Representatives: Rep. Trahan, Rep. Collins, Rep. Crosthwaite
Absent: Rep. Dugay, Rep. Canavan, Rep. O'Brien

Legislative Officers and Staff: Beth Ashcroft, Director, OPEGA
Diana Stiles Friou, Principal Analyst, OPEGA
Lorna Pelkey, Administrative Secretary, OPEGA

SUMMARY OF June 27th MEETING

The Committee did not request any changes to the June 27th meeting summary.

REPORT FROM OPEGA DIRECTOR

OPEGA Positions

Director Ashcroft informed the Committee that the OPEGA staff has been interviewing for the Senior Analyst position for the past week. She related that she is very pleased with the caliber of the candidates, and expects to select the Senior Analyst by the end of next week. The hiring focus will then move to the filling of the three analyst positions.

Schedule and Status of On-going Evaluations

Director Ashcroft stated that the Guardian Ad Litem review is on hold pending the completion of the hiring process. She updated the Committee on the status of the RFP for the IS Systems, noting that a pre-bidder's conference was held on July 14th which went very well. Four potential bidders participated.

Status of Evaluation Topics

The Director reviewed the status of evaluation topics that have been considered by the Committee so far. Sen. Dow asked for a brief review of the potential Economic Development Programs project. Director Ashcroft stated that the topic came to the Committee via the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Joint Standing Committee as described in the Part I Budget and referenced in the Appropriations Committee response to the Legislative Interest Survey.

Rep. Collins requested a little more detail on the Office of Investigations: Secretary of State project. Director Ashcroft said she believes the office investigates complaints such as vehicle title fraud. Rep. Collins asked if the office investigates abuses of corporate law and Mrs. Ashcroft stated she didn't see anything related to corporate law when she reviewed the description of the program.

Old Business

The Committee revisited the rapid response vote taken at the last Government Oversight Committee meeting. Sen. Gagnon gave a brief overview related to the process that occurred surrounding the vote. He stated that he feels the parliamentary process in the GOC meetings should run as consistently as possible to the other Joint Standing Committees' processes. A discussion followed regarding GOC voting processes and procedures. Some of the questions and concerns were:

- What constitutes a 2/3 vote of the Committee on a rapid response issue;
- What types of votes are "jacketed" votes;
- What is the validity of phone-in votes;
- What is the timeframe after a meeting for absent Committee members to come in and vote;
- What are means by which the Chair can be challenged on a specific ruling;
- Can the Chair withdraw or modify his ruling; and
- When must a Committee member sign the jacket authorizing their vote.

The Committee took a break at 10:30 and re-convened at 10:50.

The discussion resumed regarding the Committee's Voting Processes and Procedures. Director Ashcroft handed out a written proposed process that she said was based on the results of an OPEGA Staff meeting with OPLA Analyst Pat Norton and Teen Griffin, Manager of the Legislative Information Office. The purpose of that meeting was to ascertain how the other Joint Standing Committees operate and to obtain an overview of their voting process. The consensus of the Government Oversight Committee members present was that in a vote on a rapid response project, the 2/3 refers to all Committee members who vote on the issue whether they are present at the meeting or come in and vote within the appropriate timeframe.

Several Committee members expressed concern that they were uncomfortable formalizing the Voting Processes and Procedures at this meeting because the Committee is supposed to be bipartisan and only one member of the Democratic Party was present. Director Ashcroft stated that the written process she had handed out was not really a change to voting "rules", but rather clarified certain areas in the process.

Motion: That the Government Oversight Committee abide by the Voting Processes and Procedures as discussed today for any votes that may occur at this meeting and then formalize them at the next Committee meeting. (Motion by Sen. Raye, second by Rep. Collins – motion PASSED – vote: 5 in favor, 2 opposed. Those in favor: Rep. Collins, Sen. Courtney, Sen. Gagnon, Sen. Raye, Rep. Trahan. Those opposed: Rep. Crosthwaite, Sen. Dow.)

Sen. Gagnon moved for reconsideration of the motion made at the last meeting on pursuing Scope Option 1 of the Payments to Medicaid Providers topic as a Rapid Response review. The original motion had been made by Rep. Trahan and seconded by Rep. Collins. The Committee agreed to reconsider with the understanding that this was a “jacketed” vote and absent members had 48 hours to come into the OPEGA Office and cast their votes. Director Ashcroft committed to making reasonable efforts to contact the absent members to let them know of this opportunity.

Motion: That OPEGA be directed to begin work on the Payments to Medicaid Providers topic – Scope Option 1 as a Rapid Response review. (Final vote: 7 in favor, 1 opposed. Motion PASSED. Those in favor: Rep. Collins, Sen. Courtney, Sen. Gagnon, Sen. Raye, Rep. Trahan, Rep. Crosthwaite, Sen. Dow. Those opposed: Sen. Mitchell.)

New Business

Director Ashcroft informed the Committee of the results of OPEGA’s abbreviated Risk Assessment of the Evaluation Universe, and presented OPEGA’s suggestions for additional review topics to be considered for On Deck. Mrs. Ashcroft and Mrs. Friou performed a risk assessment on programs for which there had been actual expenditures in the years 2000-2004. Each program was scored on selected evaluation criteria as previously approved by the Government Oversight Committee. The fifty highest scoring programs were then sorted according to the responsible agency and the OPEGA staff strategically selected one or more topics from each agency based on additional knowledge or criteria for that program. The Director then informed the Committee of the top 9 topics selected by OPEGA.

Director Ashcroft mentioned that she would also like to see OPEGA set aside project time to complete a more comprehensive risk assessment of the evaluation universe. Sen. Gagnon suggested that she work this into OPEGA’s Annual Plan that would be presented to the Committee for approval.

Motion: To place the following potential review topics as per OPEGA’s suggestion On Deck:

- Division of Market & Production Development - Agriculture
- Support and Learning Systems – Dept. of Education
- Bureau of Health - DHHS
- Employment Services Activity – Dept. of Labor
- Community Development Block Grant – Economic & Community Development
- Remediation and Waste Management – Environmental Protection
- Administration – Public Safety
- Highway & Bridge Improvement – Transportation
- Juvenile Justice – Corrections, Courts, etc.

(Motion by Sen. Gagnon, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion - PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Director Ashcroft stated she would be working on OPEGA's annual work plan and hopes to present it to the Committee at the next GOC meeting.

A discussion followed related to recommendations for evaluation topics from the Joint Standing Committees on Labor and Transportation.

Motion: To place the potential review of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services On Deck. (Motion by Sen. Dow, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Motion: To place the potential review of the Bureau of Motor Vehicle's Computer Migration Project On Deck. (Motion by Rep. Collins, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Motion: To place the potential review of the Bureau of Motor Vehicle's Branch Offices On Deck. (Motion by Rep. Trahan, second by Rep. Crosthwaite. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Motion: To place the potential review of use of Highway Fund money by the Dept. of Public Safety On Deck. (Motion by Rep. Collins, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

After a brief discussion:

Motion: To accept the \$100,000 of appropriated Highway Fund money into OPEGA's budget to be utilized by OPEGA as appropriate in reviewing agencies and programs supported by Highway Fund monies. (Motion by Rep. Collins, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Next Meeting

The Committee set the date for the next Government Oversight Committee as August 8th at 9:30 a.m. Possible agenda items for that meeting include the OPEGA annual work plan, the Government Oversight Committee's Voting Processes and Procedures (which Director Ashcroft agreed to e-mail Committee members in advance), suggestions on how to provide Committee members with information prior to the Committee meeting, process by which the Committee will receive OPEGA's final reports, and OPEGA's procedures regarding handling of confidential information.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.