

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

**Meeting Summary
February 27, 2006**

CALL TO ORDER

The Government Oversight Committee's Chair, Sen. Mitchell, called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. in the Labor Committee Room.

ATTENDANCE

Senators: Sen. Courtney, Sen. Mitchell

Absent: Sen. Bartlett, Sen. Dow, Sen. Perry, Sen. Raye

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

Absent: Rep. DuGay

Legislative Officers and Staff: Beth Ashcroft, Director of OPEGA
Wendy Cherubini, Analyst - OPEGA
Susan Reynolds, Analyst - OPEGA
Jennifer Reichenbach, Analyst - OPEGA
Lorna Pelkey, Administrative Secretary - OPEGA

Executive Officers: Brenda Harvey, Acting Commissioner, DHHS
Richard Thompson, Chief Information Officer

Introduction of Government Oversight Committee Members

Members of the Government Oversight Committee introduced themselves for the benefit of the listening audience.

Director Ashcroft introduced OPEGA staff members who were present for the meeting: Wendy Cherubini, Susan Reynolds, Jennifer Reichenbach and Lorna Pelkey.

COMMITTEE VOTE ON OPEGA FINAL REPORT

Director Beth Ashcroft informed the Committee that OPEGA advertised an announcement of today's scheduled Public Hearing in four weekend newspapers (related to OPEGA's review regarding State-wide Planning and Management of Information Technology). Sen. Mitchell asked if there were any public comments on the above report to be heard at this meeting and there were none. Director Ashcroft reported that there had been no written comments received.

After a brief overview of the above review from Director Ashcroft, the following motion was made:

Motion: That the Government Oversight Committee endorse OPEGA’s final report on State-wide Planning and Management of Information Technology. (Motion by Rep. O’Brien, seconded by Rep. Collins – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Senator Mitchell, the Senate Chair of the Committee, commented that Taxation is getting a new IT System in the future and she feels what has been gained and learned from the OPEGA Report on Information Technology will be very helpful to them.

OPEGA DRAFT REPORT PRESENTATION

Director Ashcroft presented the OPEGA Draft Report regarding Riverview Bed Capacity. First, she acknowledged OPEGA Analysts Wendy Cherubini and Jennifer Reichenbach for their help in performing the review and preparing the report. She also stated that OPEGA was presenting a Draft Report instead of the Final Report because under OPEGA’s statute the Dept. of Health and Human Services has 15 days to provide comments that would be included in the Final Report. Since this was a Rapid Response Review, the 15-day period had only begun. After the 15-day period has passed, OPEGA will incorporate any Department comments and issue the Final Report.

During the presentation, the Director and Commissioner Harvey responded to questions and comments from Committee members. In general, these exchanges focused on the following areas:

- Reasons why the data collection has been unsuccessful;
- Membership of the Bed Review Committee;
- Role of the Courtmaster for the AMHI Consent Decree;
- Reasons why the original records supporting the data reported to the Bed Review Committee were not retained;
- Specifics on data that was and was not collected by Riverview;
- How “culture” entered into the lack of oversight for this data collection process at Department level, legislative level and with the Bed Review Committee; and
- Challenges in making decisions about best way to provide the necessary mental health services, i.e. hospital vs. community, rural vs. city

Sen. Mitchell thanked Commissioner Harvey for coming to the meeting today and speaking to Committee members.

After the presentation a discussion ensued among Committee members as to possible next steps for the Committee regarding Riverview. Sen. Mitchell expressed that she still didn’t have adequate information to determine whether Riverview should be expanded. She was also interested in knowing what data DHHS was basing their position on, i.e. that Riverview did not need to be expanded. Rep. Trahan indicated that he would like for more information to be available as soon as possible so that these questions didn’t linger on any longer.

Director Ashcroft reminded the Committee that there were a couple of other scope options in OPEGA’s original Riverview Scope Statement that they could consider. She noted, however, that before proceeding with either of those she would want to have a better idea of what data was already being collected, or planned to be collected, by DHHS in relation to the Consent Decree. She said she would also want to have a good understanding of the scope of work that DHHS had hired Elizabeth Jones to do. The Director advocated that it was important to have this information so that OPEGA did not set out to perform a review that would duplicate work already being done or planned.

Sen. Courtney suggested that the Committee have Director Ashcroft send a letter to Commissioner Harvey seeking responses to these questions and others of interest to the Committee. The other Committee members agreed with this proposal and requested that the Director send such a letter.

WORK SESSION

Discussion of OPEGA's Findings to Date

Director Ashcroft requested Committee members to proceed to Tab 1 where they will find a document listing OPEGA's findings and recommendations on the three reviews completed to date. After a brief discussion, Committee members asked that this agenda item be addressed at the next GOC meeting. They also requested that the Director prepare for that meeting a list of appropriate actions the GOC might take on the findings and recommendations.

MEETING SUMMARIES

Motion: That the meeting summaries of December 19th and January 30th meetings be approved as written. (Motion by Rep. O'Brien, seconded by Rep. Crosthwaite – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

REPORT FROM OPEGA DIRECTOR

Director Ashcroft updated the Committee on the application process for the administrative secretary position noting that there had been 103 applicants.

Project Status Report and Proposed changes to Annual Plan

After a brief discussion, this item was moved to the next GOC meeting. In preparation for that discussion, Director Ashcroft will revise the budget hour estimates for the remaining projects on the Annual Plan and also determine an estimate of the total remaining project hours available for OPEGA staff in FY06.

REVIEW DRAFT PROCESS FOR HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY OPEGA

Director Ashcroft directed the Committee members to Tab 4 to review a draft document related to this agenda item. A discussion ensued related to jurisdictional issues as well as item 4, length of time to complete investigation of these complaints. The Committee also suggested a revision to item 9.

Motion: That the Government Oversight Committee approve the Process for Handling Complaints/Allegations Received by OPEGA with the following changes:

Item 3 to read: If another party would be more appropriate or has jurisdiction by law, to handle the complaint, OPEGA will forward the complaint to that party. The complaint and actions taken by OPEGA will be documented.

Item 4: Delete the sentence "Time spent on these activities should not exceed 8 hours per complaint."

Item 9 to read: If a complaint received by OPEGA is of an urgent nature, the Director will attempt to contact and brief the GOC Chairs and Minority Leads immediately. The Chairs will decide on the gravity of the complaint and whether to call an emergency meeting of the GOC to deal with the complaint.

(Motion by Rep. Crosthwaite, seconded by Rep. Collins – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

SCHEDULE NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee set Monday, March 6th at 1:00 p.m. for the next GOC meeting. The Committee members agreed that the first Monday in the month at 1:00 p.m. would be an appropriate time for Committee meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.