

Members

Sen. Connie Lawson, Chairperson
Sen. Richard Young
Rep. William Friend
Rep. Scott Pelath



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL EVALUATION OVERSIGHT POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

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Authority: IC 2-5-21-6

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 12, 2007
Meeting Time: 2:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., 431
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Connie Lawson, Chairperson; Sen. Richard Young; Rep. William Friend; Rep. Scott Pelath.

Members Absent: None.

Call to Order

Sen. Connie Lawson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 2:15 pm, and introduced the members of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee members waived reading of the Subcommittee's charge found in IC 2-5-21. Sen. Lawson reviewed recent reports prepared by LSA under the direction of the Subcommittee.

Discussion of Potential Topics

Sen. Lawson stated that the objective of the meeting was to prepare a resolution for the Legislative Council with recommended study topics. She began by suggesting that LSA be instructed to begin preparing for an evaluation of the Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP), a health care coverage plan adopted in the last session. Although the evaluation would take place three or four years after implementation in 2008, preparing for the evaluation would allow LSA to work with the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) to establish measurements of program outcomes through the planning and implementation phase.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Sen. Richard Young asked how many topics LSA would be able to prepare. Ms. Diane Powers, LSA, answered that the number would depend on the extensiveness of the topic. The first phase of an evaluation of HIP would not be extensive and would allow for one or two other smaller evaluations. Sen. Young indicated that he would like an evaluation of the new Department of Agriculture and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation.

Rep. Scott Pelath said that most of the calls he receives concern property tax and that he would like to see an evaluation of the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) to develop a deeper understanding of the organization. In order to narrow the focus of the evaluation, Rep. Pelath suggested looking at whether DLGF is adequately staffed and if the staff has the necessary expertise. Ms. Powers said that these questions would have to be considered in the context of the budgetary funding levels. Additional discussion ensued concerning the changes that had been made to DLGF in recent years and changes that have been proposed. Rep. William Friend pointed out that several committees are looking at property taxes already and that these groups may return with recommendations concerning DLGF, making a potential legislative evaluation duplicative.

Rep. Friend recommended that the Subcommittee consider an evaluation of the federal school breakfast and lunch program, including how services are delivered and whether efficiencies, such as mass purchases, are attainable.

Sen. Lawson agreed with an evaluation of the Department of Agriculture. Sen. Lawson expressed concerns with an evaluation of a statewide tax assessing system, the method that would be used to evaluate it, and the potential duplication of work. Ms. Powers said that the statutory changes to the operations of DLGF and the property tax system change the dynamics of a potential evaluation and acknowledged that there were a lot of issues to drill down on.

Rep. Pelath suggested looking at how DLGF handles requests and whether locals are getting information in a timely manner. Sen. Young said that county auditors and assessors had told him it was difficult to communicate with DLGF. He said that he had been an auditor and knew the importance of DLGF to getting property tax bills out in a timely manner. Sen. Young said that property tax is the biggest challenge to the General Assembly and that the property tax system centers around how DLGF works or does not work. Sen. Lawson indicated that she recently had a letter from the assessor of Washington Township in Hendricks County which complimented DLGF's work with the locals. Rep. Friend reiterated his concern about duplication of efforts. He said that the agency would not go without scrutiny.

Ms. Powers pointed to IC 2-5-21-13, which identifies the evaluation objectives and compared an evaluation of the Department of Agriculture to DLGF based on these guidelines. She said that the legislative evaluation uses the statute to determine what an agency is supposed to do and then sees if the agency is doing it. She said that the locals were responsible for the equalization studies which were sent to DLGF for review, but that recent changes transferred the equalization studies to DLGF and that they may be required to hire additional staff, making a study of staffing levels difficult. Ms. Powers suggested that LSA report back to the Subcommittee potential areas for evaluation at DLGF. Because there is more change to come, Ms. Powers suggested that LSA could track the legislative and budgetary changes to DLGF. Ms. Powers cautioned that a timeliness study could be difficult because data is sent back to local units several times before it is accepted as correct and complete. She requested time to determine what would be an area that LSA could review given the complexity and sensitivity of the current situation.

Rep. Pelath agreed, saying that he would like to identify a specific and nonduplicative area to

study. Sen. Lawson asked for a motion and Rep. Pelath moved that LSA make a recommendation for one specific and nonduplicative issue to study concerning DLGF. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Discussion continued on the Department of Agriculture evaluation until Sen. Young moved a review of the Department of Agriculture focusing on whether the reorganization has accomplished its goal of promoting agriculture as measured by improved marketing and greater focus on agriculture in the state, and providing a progress report on the reorganization. The motion was unanimously adopted.

Next, Rep. Pelath moved that LSA establish measurements and benchmarks for future evaluation of HIP and work with FSSA. The motion passed unanimously.

Sen. Lawson pointed out that there were other items that would not be reviewed by LSA this year. Rep. Friend said that he hoped there would be another way to study the school lunch matter. Sen. Lawson said that she had not had the opportunity to mention an evaluation concerning the consistency and rigor of the state nursing home survey. She said that the surveys evaluate nursing home compliance with state and federal regulations and guidelines and that questions had been raised about the consistency of the evaluators from region to region in the state, and that Indiana evaluators are thought to be more rigorous than other state evaluators.

Sen. Lawson adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.