
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5720

AN ACT REESTABLISHING THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE.

SUMMARY

This bill re-establishes the legislative Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee as a 12-member permanent standing committee beginning with the 2024 legislative session. The committee previously existed from 1973 through 2016 (see BACKGROUND).

The bill generally restores the committee's previous powers and duties (e.g., the authority to access state agencies' records and files, including by subpoena). As under prior law, the bill requires the PRI Committee to examine state agency programs to determine whether they are effective, continue to serve their intended purpose, are conducted in an efficient and effective manner, or require modification or elimination. It allows the committee to receive study requests from legislators, legislative committees, elected state officials, agency heads, and the legislature as a whole. It also allows the committee to undertake studies at its own initiative.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The bill re-establishes the PRI Committee as a 12-member permanent standing committee with three members from each caucus appointed by the caucus's leader. It requires the leaders to make initial appointments by February 7, 2024 (i.e., the start of the 2024 session), and then make subsequent appointments at the beginning of each regular session in an odd-numbered year. Members serve for two years from their appointment, and their service ends with the termination of their term or holding of office, whichever occurs first. The chairpersons and

ranking members of a joint standing committee requesting an investigation must serve as ex-officio, nonvoting PRI Committee members during the course of the investigation.

The bill requires the committee members to elect chairpersons from among the members. (In prior practice, the committee had one chairperson from each party, alternating between the caucuses each term.) Under the bill, all committee actions require a majority vote of the full committee membership, and a majority of the membership constitutes a quorum.

POWERS AND DUTIES

The bill generally restores PRI's previous statutory powers and duties, including the following:

1. obtain public records, data, information, and other assistance needed by the committee from political subdivisions (e.g., municipalities) and state agencies, officers, and authorities;
2. subpoena (by either chairperson) witnesses and require the production of books, papers, and other documents;
3. retain, within available appropriations, consultants, technical assistants, research, and other needed personnel;
4. review and assess reports from the state auditors and quasi-public agencies; and
5. report to the legislature annually by February 15.

The bill also restores provisions requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Judicial Review Council to disclose to the PRI Committee specified information when requested by the committee in writing upon a majority vote. Specifically, it adds the PRI Committee to the list of committees to which DCF must disclose records without a subject's consent upon a majority vote of the committee. (Under existing law, it must disclose records to the Children's, Human Services, and Judiciary committees upon a majority vote.) As under

existing law, DCF may not disclose any names or identifying information unless essential to a legislative purpose.

The bill requires the Judicial Review Council to disclose information about complaints received against judges, administrative law judges, and family support magistrates, as well as the complaints' investigation and disposition. However, the council may not disclose names or other identifying information.

Like prior law, the bill prohibits disclosing the identity of a public employee who provides information to the PRI Committee. It makes the committee's investigation records exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act until the investigation is completed.

The bill also subjects the committee and its staff and authorized representatives to statutory confidentiality requirements for records, data, and information to the same extent that these requirements apply to other agencies and officials, including penalties for violations.

BACKGROUND

PRI Committee

The PRI Committee previously existed from 1973 through 2016. The committee's funding was eliminated by the FY 17 budget revisions (PA 16-2, May Special Session). PA 17-60 eliminated statutory references to the committee's powers and duties.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/15/2023)