

Government Efficiency Task Force re-authorization. HB 2855.
Testimony to Committee.

When the 75th Assembly considered a Government Efficiency task force in 2009, I testified about the economic crisis facing Oregon and her 36 counties, and an economically unsustainable system of delivering services to Oregonians.

The natural tendency is for bureaucratic systems to become more complex and tangled over time, as good ideas are piled onto existing systems. Years – decades – of layering good ideas on top of other, previous year’s good ideas, and not cleaning out the closet. It’s our job to periodically take a step back, look at the whole picture and make adjustments to those systems so that they are working effectively and efficiently.

Just one example problem type: Approving new and separate programs, but lack of attention to *existing* programs, and computer systems, that should have been adapted and expanded, not replicated or overlapped. Resources are sometimes going to redundant bureaucracy, not to delivering services. Best use of resources can be about *physical facilities* as well as processes. We need to work better, and work smarter, and do that in conjunction with our county partners.

There are about 50 kinds of service areas – from permits to water quality; animals and wildlife; and especially human services and public safety – where both the state and the 36 counties are involved.

We should look at simplification; regionalization; and reorganization, with an emphasis on saving money and improving service.

Other efforts¹ underway are focused on how the **state** works; this one brings groups to the table as equal partners to untangle our systems, and reduce the overlap.

Recognizing the need to restructure the delivery of government services, the 2009-10 task force representatives of state and local governments and organizations worked together to identify opportunities to improve processes, fix problems, eliminate burdensome procedures, and so on. The ideas improve efficiency, reduce cost, and in some cases, also improve service.

The task force itself demonstrated new ways of doing things and efficiency, utilizing web based conferencing, posting all task force and subcommittee materials to our website, and staffed jointly with help from AOC.

The Task Force approved nearly two dozen practical, achievable ideas for including in a report of final recommendations. Several will be accomplished through administration actions, and a number of them require statutory change to make things better. I hope those 23 recommendations from the Task Force signaled the beginning, not the end, of a process. The objective of this bill is to continue the collaborative effort to identify process improvements and opportunities to re-structure the delivery of government services, especially with state and county shared programs.

¹ Sen. Chris Edwards; Governor Kulongoski’s Reset Cabinet; Rep. Paul Holvey, Consumer Protection and Govt Accountability; DAS “Wall to Wall” – in house, enterprise, contract for services; DHS Transformation initiative; and the Technology work group

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Restructuring – and reset – should not be done only within the walls of state government. Work on restructuring will not achieve the optimal efficiencies without working WITH our government partners. Together we should be developing new approaches. Journals such as *Governing* and *State Legislatures* have reported on government efficiency efforts, and remind us that structural changes won't come overnight. The private sector and non-profit organizations address the concept, too. A newsletter last fall from the State Independent Living Council shows that their own goals include “collaboration and partnership activities.”

The Task Force was enthusiastic about their work together, demonstrating that state and local governments can work together with good outcomes, and developing practical, achievable recommendations. After adopting over twenty specific ideas, their final recommendation was to re-authorize the joint state and local government collaboration.

Complaining doesn't fix anything; rolling up our sleeves is what it takes. This group of people worked together across jurisdictional lines to reduce red tape, save money, untangle bureaucracy and improve public services for Oregon residents. They proved that state and local governments are willing to do that; this bill will keep the ball rolling in the right direction.