



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Senate approves bills demanding answers from state agencies and ESDs *Two bills address implementation of audit recommendations*

SALEM – Legislation that requires state agencies to report back to the Legislature on the recommendations of audits by the Secretary of State’s office passed in the Senate this morning with a unanimous vote.

Currently, state agencies are not held accountable for implementing or improving their functions based on those external audits.

“This bill is a key piece of the Senate Democrats’ commitment to improve government accountability,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Particularly as we address our budget challenges this session, we must be looking for ways to deliver services with greater efficiency and less cost. Requiring state agencies to explain how they are improving their operations and getting the greatest value out of taxpayer dollars will be an important tool for the Legislature and Oregonians.”

SB 907 complements one of the core constitutional responsibilities of the Secretary of State, overseeing public accounts through the Audits Division. That department’s mission is to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for, spent in accordance with legal requirements, and used to their best advantage. The Secretary of State produced 41 audit reports in 2010, each selected to produce the best value for Oregon taxpayers.

“My audits division provides important recommendations that improve operations of state government, achieve greater efficiency, greater savings and improved service delivery, said Secretary of State Kate Brown. “It is important that these recommendations be implemented and appropriate for the Legislature to monitor progress.”

SB 907 specifically requires agencies that are the subject of a Secretary of State performance or program audit to present a report to the Legislative Assembly during the following regular legislative session. The agency report must describe the actions taken by the public body to address the audit findings.

“Oversight of state agencies is a key function of the Legislature and growing in importance now that voters have approved annual sessions,” said Senator Chip Shields (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the floor. “When areas of improvement are identified in state agencies, it only makes sense that someone holds those agencies accountable. The Legislature is the proper branch for this job.”

The Senate also took action today on Senate Bill 27, legislation that requires Education Service Districts to file an annual financial audit with the Oregon Department of Education. That bill gives the Department the legal authority to withhold state funding if corrective measures are not made after two successive audit findings.

“Mismanagement at some Oregon ESDs is well-documented,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), chair of the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee. “This bill provides an additional tool to make sure taxpayer dollars are being used appropriately and efficiently.”

Both bills now go to the House for consideration.

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For more information on the Senate Majority Caucus, please visit oregonsenatedemocrats.com