

Memorandum from Rep. Bob Godfrey, 110th District
To: Legislative Process Advisory Committee
September 21, 2004

Re: Base closings and saving taxpayer dollars, an irreverent proposal

Let me give a shot at a reorganization of our committee structure, practices and costs.

The Principle. I've taken as a principle that our standing committees and the executive branch agencies should ideally be analogous. For each agency, there should be a committee with primary, if not sole cognizance, and each committee should have that mentioned in the joint rules.

In Table 1, I have taken a stab at comparing the committees' cognizance under the current joint rules. I've listed in the first column each committee (except the statutory Regulations Review and PRI, Legislative Management which has no executive agency jurisdiction, and Executive and Legislative Nominations, which has all of them) and in the second column the executive branch department named in the rules. In brackets I have placed explicitly named executive agencies that are not full departments.

Proposal 1. Consolidations.

- a. **The Banks and the Insurance Committees.** The banking and insurance industries have merged. So should our committees (maybe our departments, too, but that's another debate for another place). In addition to the merit of this, these two committees have traditionally had a very low volume of bills JF'd. This new committee would have specific cognizance of the Banking and Insurance Departments, as well as the substantive law. It should not, however, have the real estate cognizance; the Department of Consumer Protection conducts real estate licensing and regulation, so the real estate cognizance should move to the committee having cognizance of consumer protection.
- b. **General Law and Energy and Technology Committees.** The first thing we need to do in the name of transparency is rename General Law *Consumer Protection* so people know what it does. Then include both DCP and DPUC (our consumer protection agencies) in the committee cognizance. As I also observed at our first meeting, there is no energy department. The energy committee was created in the 1970's in response to the gasoline crisis. It's over; just look at the number of SUV's guzzling gas at \$2 a gallon.
- c. **Commerce, Planning & Development, & Housing.** One of the original select committees was housing, overseeing the department of housing. Then, a few years

ago we spun off Commerce from P&D, halving the oversight of DED. Then we merged the Departments of Economic Development and Housing. So we now have three committees overseeing DECD. Now, no one will argue that DECD is unimportant. But do we need three committees? We only have one for the entire judicial branch, one to wrestle with the enormity of DSS and DCF, and none at all for OPM. Lets combine the two standing committees into a committee on economic and community development.

- d. **Education and Higher Education.** While Solomon showed wisdom in threatening to cut the baby in two, he didn't actually wield the sword. I respectfully suggest we shouldn't have cut education in two. Learning is a lifelong continuum that is best addressed by one committee. Let's reunite them.

Proposal 2. Separations

Yes, there is a need to break apart two committees.

- a. **Separate Government Administration from Elections.** I have noticed that GAE attracts members interested more in the "E" than the "GA". Or maybe that was just I. It may be time to separate these two functions into two committees, as was the case as late as the early 1980's. First, the General Assembly has been, as an institution, rather lax in our oversight of DAS, DPW, and DOIT. Indeed, more than one of our colleagues, the media, and other observers have criticized this laxity in light of the recent contracting scandals. We should pay more attention to these oversight functions, and perhaps expand on them (e.g. reviving the sunset review statutes). Second, the recent scandals have led to current promises to address them and to make state government more accessible and accountable. I suspect this will be a major bi-partisan and bi-cameral subject in the coming term. So I propose a *committee on government administration* with oversight of DAS, DPW, DOIT, reorganizations, and sunset review, and a *committee on government access and elections* with cognizance of election law, ethics, and freedom of information.
- b. **Divide Human Services.** DSS and DCF are enormous, have been in the news mostly negatively in the last few years (although things are improving rapidly), and hard to get a handle on. So create on *committee on social services* with cognizance of DSS, and a *committee on children and families* with cognizance of DCF. And, happily, that allows us to *terminate the select committee on children*.

Proposal 3. "New" Committees.

Actually, these are mostly renamed or reworked existing committees.

- a. **Committee on Consumer Protection.** See consolidation #2 above.
- b. **Committee on Municipalities and Tribal Nations.** A reworked P&D. This covers the subject matter of the non-DECD part of P&D (e.g. the state plan of conservation and development, or smart growth), and adds an issue that we have a need to add to our work: relations with the tribal nations. I've chosen to place them together because (1) there is a commonality of interest (they are all bodies politic), (2) the relations between the state and the tribal nations are also an

concern to the towns the nations are within, and (3) there are relations between the towns and tribal nations that need to be recognized. *N.B. This cognizance does not extend to gaming issues, which go to Finance. Revenue and Bonding.* Additionally, IMHO, municipalities are not the so-called children of the state; they are our siblings when it comes to providing government services. Their interests deservedly need more attention, particularly when it comes to unfunded mandates.

- c. **Select Committee on Veterans Affairs.** I am aware that there is a popular interest in both houses and both parties in providing better oversight of DVA and veterans benefits. I suggest we try a select committee as a pilot, and see how it does.

In Table 2 I have listed this reconfiguration. There would be one less committee than is current. It is a start.

Proposal 4. Move gaming from Public Safety to Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

Finance oversees the division of special revenue. It should also oversee the creation and disposition of that revenue. Public Safety should be about law enforcement, not gambling.

Proposal 5. The Select Committees. It was a good idea at the time. The legislature would address subjects of topical and time sensitive interests through a temporary committee that would exist for only one term. But they've become permanent. They do not produce much in the way of volume, according to the research done by OLR. I suggest that, if we are to keep them, we consolidate their now separate staffs into those of the committees to which they report (and name such committees: like Aging to Social Services, Housing to Commerce and Economic Development, Veterans Affairs to Public Safety). This cuts down on overhead costs and staff costs. We save taxpayers money.

Proposal 6. Reduce the size of committees. This saves some overhead costs. But it is a step towards more participation by legislators, less conflicts of scheduling, more orderly and comprehensible meetings, and enough chairs for all the members to sit in (No committee should have more members than can fit in the largest meeting room!). One place to start: *House committee chairs, vice chairs, and ranking members should devote all their legislative time to their committee exclusively, and NOT sit on any other committees.* Another idea would be to prohibit House members from serving on more than two committees. Why just the House? Because the relatively small number of Senators requires multiple memberships just to cover all the committees.

Proposal 7. Expand committee categories A and B by to A, B, C, and maybe D. Give them each their own day of the week, with the remaining day or days reserved for the high-volume committees. This spreads out the workload more during the workweek, and (especially if coupled with requirements that no member serve on more than one committee in each category) prevents scheduling conflicts. *No one will have to be in two committees at the same time.*

TABLE 1

Committee	Executive Department
Appropriations	None
Banks	None named
Commerce	DECD [CDA, Ct Innovations]
Education	Education [Comm. On Arts]
Energy & Technology	DPUC
Environment	DEP, DAG
Finance, Revenue & Bonding	DRS [Special Revenue]
General Law	DCP
Govt. Admin. & Elections	DAS, DPW, DOIT [FOIC, Ethics]
Higher Ed. & Workforce Dev.	DHE [Office of Workforce Dev.]
Human Services	DSS, DCF [BESB, OPAPD, CDHI]
Insurance & Real Estate	None named
Judiciary	DOC [CHRO]
Labor & Public Employees	DOL
Planning & Development	None
Public Health	DPH, DMHAS, DMR [OHCA, CHHC]
Public Safety	DPS
Transportation	DOT, DMV [STC]
Aging	None
Children	None
Housing	None
None	OPM
None named	Banking Department
None named	Insurance Department
None named	Dept of Veterans Affairs

TABLE 2

Proposed Committee

Executive Department

Appropriations

None (Budget)

Banks & Insurance
 Children & Families
 Commerce & Economic Dev
 Consumer Protection
 Education
 Govt. Access & Elections
 Environment
 Finance, Revenue & Bonding
 Government Administration

 Judiciary
 Labor & Public Employees
 Municipalities & Tribal Nations
 Public Health
 Public Safety
 Social Services
 Transportation

 Aging
 Housing
 Veterans Affairs

Banking and Insurance Depts.
 DCF
 DECD
 DCP, DPUC [Sub. Law of I.T.]
 Education and Higher Education
 [Elections, Ethics, FOIC]
 DEP, DAG
 DRS [Spec Rev – incl. Gaming]
 DAS, DPW, DOIT [Federal
 Relations]
 DOC
 DOL
 None
 DPH, DMHAS, DMR
 DPS
 DSS
 DOT, DMV

 None (bills to Social Services)
 None (bills to Comm & Ec Dev)
 DVA (bills to PS)