

Scope of Study

SUNSET LAW IN CONNECTICUT

The Connecticut Sunset Law, enacted in 1977, sets out a list of specific government entities and programs that are to terminate by a date certain on a five-year cycle unless affirmatively reestablished by the legislature (C.G.S. Secs. 2c-1 through 2c-12). Since the sunset law was enacted in 1977, only one five-year cycle has been carried out--1980 through 1984. Since then, the five-year sunset cycle has been postponed five times.

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) is required under the sunset law to conduct a performance audit of each listed entity prior to its scheduled termination date, based on statutory criteria. During the one and only five-year sunset cycle carried out, PRI examined a total of 94 entities.

In 1998, PRI studied the sunset law, examining the benefits of the current law as well as alternative forms a sunset mechanism could take in Connecticut. The committee recommended in its December 1998 report that the state's sunset law should be continued, but modified in a number of ways. A bill was raised to implement the PRI recommendations, but died in the GAE committee (sSB 1177).

P.A. 01-160 enacted the last sunset postponement. Per that legislation, 28 entities or programs are scheduled for termination on July 1, 2008, the first year of a five-year cycle, unless affirmatively reestablished by the legislature. This termination date means that 28 entities or programs will be the subjects of PRI performance audits during calendar 2007 in order for the committee to meet its obligations under the Connecticut sunset law. H.B. 6997 is pending to postpone the sunset cycle until 2010 to allow for this study.

AREA OF FOCUS

The study will examine the merits and requirements of the Connecticut sunset law and explore alternative ways of achieving those merits through other performance review/measurement processes.

AREAS OF ANALYSIS

- 1) Review original intent of sunset law and assess its continued validity.
- 2) Review the use of sunset mechanism in other states.
- 3) Assess the sunset mechanism in the context of other performance review methods in Connecticut.
- 4) Develop alternative approaches for Connecticut as warranted.