

Assemblymember Huber Authors Bill to Eliminate Waste in State Government

AB 1659 Automatically Eliminates Boards and Commissions Unless they are Proven Effective

SACRAMENTO – Assemblymember Alyson Huber has introduced a bill that will help identify and eliminate waste, duplication, and inefficiency in government agencies. AB 1659 would take existing legislative resources and re-direct them to the Joint Sunset Review Committee which would conduct a comprehensive analysis of every state government agency to determine if the agency is still necessary and cost effective.

“A clear lesson of the past decade: government must change the way it does business,” said Assemblymember Huber. “I share my constituents’ frustration with government inefficiency and a lack of accountability. Legislators create new boards, commissions, agencies and departments to solve a problem and then no one looks back and asks whether the new bureaucracy actually solved the problem it was created to solve or whether the problem is worse. We can fix this systemic problem by conducting comprehensive, regular reviews of state government to ensure taxpayers that their money is being used wisely. Other states have been doing this for years and California should adopt this common sense approach to oversight.”

As introduced, AB 1659 would require that an agency be automatically eliminated unless the Legislature votes to extend, consolidate, or reorganize the agency based on the recommendation of the Sunset Review Committee. Prior to the committee’s recommendation each agency scheduled for sunset would be required to submit a report to the committee. Then, the committee would take public testimony and evaluate the agency prior to the date the agency is scheduled to be sunset.

In 1989, the Little Hoover Commission issued a report, entitled Boards and Commissions: California's Hidden Government, which found that, “California's multi-level, complex governmental structure today includes more than 400 boards, commissions, authorities, associations, councils and committees. These plural bodies operate to a large degree autonomously and outside of the normal checks and balances of representative government.”

The Commission concluded that “the state's boards, commissions and similar bodies are proliferating without adequate evaluation of need, effectiveness and efficiency.”

Since the Little Hoover report many more boards, commissions and other entities have been added to California’s government structure. Recently, the California Performance Review evaluated 339 state boards and commissions. Some estimates are as high as a 1,000 government entities.

Numerous other states have a sunset review function. In Texas for example, they have had the Sunset Advisory Commission since 1978. Since the Commission’s inception 58 agencies have been abolished and another 12 agencies have been consolidated for a total savings of almost \$800 million dollars, or \$27 for each dollar spent on the Commission.

Despite the explosion in California’s bureaucracy no system has been instituted to comprehensively evaluate their effectiveness and necessity. Furthermore, as found twenty years ago, a comprehensive listing of the organizations that make up state government does not seem to exist. AB 1659 addresses the need for a system of review.

“We must get a handle on our bloated state government. The only way to be certain that the state is operating as efficiently as possible is to ask the tough questions year after year – are the state agencies truly meeting their goals and are they worth the cost?” concluded Huber.

Link to Little Hoover Report: <http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/097/report97.PDF>

To view the bill language visit <http://leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html> and enter the bill number, 1659.