

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2013-14 Performance Report

Attorney General

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

It is the mission of the Office of Attorney General to protect and defend the interests of Oklahomans and the state by acting with excellence as its chief legal officer.

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:

Tom Bates, First Assistant Attorney General, 405.521.3921/Melissa Houston, Chief of Staff, 405.522.4422

GOVERNANCE:

The Agency is directed by Oklahoma Attorney General E. Scott Pruitt.

GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY:

The Office of Attorney General is led by the Attorney General, who is a statewide elected officer.

MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:

The office is currently working toward an updated technology. The movement toward upgrading the webpage is progressing. The office expects to increase the public's ability to access information such as requests by other agencies for outside counsel, more commonly known as 20i contracts. Furthermore, Attorney General Opinions will continue to be transmitted and accessed electronically. Efforts are also being made to implement paperless systems in several units including Finance, Medicaid Fraud, and Criminal Appeals.

The office has been approved to transition from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Exchange. The agency has begun assessing each unit's need for databases currently utilized through Lotus. It is expected that the mail and calendar will be converted within six months with the databases to follow shortly thereafter. The agency is also in negotiations with JustWare and the District Attorney's Counsel for a case management system. It is expected that this project will be up and running within four months.

CORE MISSION:

The core mission of the Office of Attorney General is to provide legal services to the state of Oklahoma. The greatest hindrance to this mission is the lack of funding to adequately staff various units, particularly Public Protection, General Counsel and Litigation. Redirecting resources spent on private attorneys would insure the Office more fully accomplished its core mission and could be done at a fraction of the current \$10 million price tag.

PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:

The Office of Attorney General provides legal services to state agencies. It should be the exception and not the rule that those be outsourced, if at all. State agencies currently spend approximately \$10 million annually on private attorneys. The greatest concern is less accountability, increased cost to Oklahoma taxpayers and unnecessary and prolonged litigation. Legal representation through the Office is typically far more economical than private firms, which charge \$150 - \$300 an hour while the Attorney General currently charges \$75 - \$85 per hour.