

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2013-14 Performance Report

Attorney General

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

It is the mission of the Office of Attorney General (OAG) to protect and defend the interests of Oklahomans and the State of Oklahoma 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 OAG has approval for several projects that will improve existing technologies and allow the OAG to better serve other agencies and the general public. Funding is in place and implementation of these projects should be complete by the end of the fiscal year provided IT resources are made available. These projects include an interactive website that will increase the public's ability to access information such as requests by other agencies for outside counsel (20i contracts) and Attorney General Opinions. Additional projects include the migration from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Exchange, a voice over IP telephone system, and JustWare case management software.

CORE MISSION:

The core mission of the Office of the Attorney General is to provide legal services to the State of Oklahoma and its various agencies. This mission is often hindered by the substantial resources spent on private attorneys that could be redirected to increase the ability of the Office of the Attorney General to provide legal services to all state agencies. The Office of the Attorney General strives to provide an attractive alternative to the use of private attorneys.

PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:

The Attorney General is the chief law officer of the State of Oklahoma and provides legal services to state agencies; however, many state agencies still utilize private attorneys for legal counsel. It should be the exception and not the rule that legal services be outsourced. It is preferable to use the Office of the Attorney General for legal services because of the increase in accountability, quicker and more efficient litigation, and more economical use of taxpayer dollars through greatly reduced legal fees. To that end, the Office of the Attorney General has made an effort to provide a greater share of the legal services to the State of Oklahoma than in the past. As an example, in Fiscal Year 2013 the various state agencies spent approximately \$7.5 million on private attorneys, which is a \$1.6 million decrease from the over \$9 million spent on private attorneys in Fiscal Year 2012.