

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

Action:	Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed
Vote:	7 - 0 - 1
Yeas:	Cameron, Clem, Conger, Matthews, Sheehan, Holvey, Whisnant
Nays:	0
Exc.:	Smith J.
Prepared By:	Jan Nordlund, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	2/10, 3/1, 3/10

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Extends confidentiality to any person making a call to the Government Waste Hotline. Allows person making a report of state waste, inefficiency, or abuse to waive confidentiality. Allows the Secretary of State to forward an allegation to another public body unless the person making the report objects. Provides that the investigation and any determinations made are confidential until the investigation is complete. Provides that all documents, information, or other records following completion of an investigation are disclosable public records except for the identity of the reporter. Allows local governments and service districts to establish hotlines with similar processes for investigating and disclosure of reports on local waste, inefficiency, and abuse.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Protecting caller identity as opposed to substance of call
- When information is disclosed
- Support of local auditors who operate hotlines
- Anonymous callers or submitters
- Desire to have report on number of “red-tape” complaints

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Provides that all documents, information, or other records following completion of an investigation or determination not to investigate beyond an initial investigation are disclosable public records except for the identity of the reporter. Removes provision allowing the secretary, when an investigation determined allegations to be unfounded, to disclose a brief summary of the allegations and determination.

BACKGROUND: The Government Waste Hotline was established in 1995 in the Office of the Secretary of State to receive reports on waste, inefficiency, or abuse by state agencies, state employees, or persons under contract with state agencies. Though the hotline is meant to take reports on waste, inefficiency and abuse occurring in state government, people also call the hotline regarding tax fraud and local government issues. The secretary would like to be able to forward those calls to the appropriate agency. Current statute provides confidentiality if the caller is reporting state waste, inefficiency, or abuse; House Bill 2246 extends the confidentiality to all callers of the hotline.