Republican Lawmakers Display “Staggering Ignorance” of Legislative Audit Bureau

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MADISON - Republican Representatives **David Craig** (R-Big Bend) and **Adam Jarchow** (R-Balsam Lake) have authored a bill to entirely eliminate the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) and the legislature’s Joint Committee on Audit as well.

Under the proposal, the independent audit bureau would be replaced by inspectors general who would provide auditing services to all state agencies with more than 100 employees. The inspectors general work under each department head, but are directed to audit their agencies and/or programs by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Majority Leader. Both are Republicans.

The LAB has had a long history of independent audits of the Executive Branch. Governors of both parties have wished it would go away, fearing reviews they could not control.

The timing of this bill is especially curious coming on the heels of the extremely critical audit of the Walker Administration's WEDC, which has been rife with mismanagement and perceived cronyism.

Senator **Kathleen Vinehout** (D-Alma), a frequent spokeswoman for progressive values on these pages and ranking minority member of the Joint Committee on Audit, harshly criticized the bill this morning.



“The breadth of the Representatives’ ignorance of the LAB activities and processes is staggering,” Vinehout said. “Their bill shows a complete unfamiliarity with the skills of auditors, the efficiencies in government that LAB staff helped create and the fraud, waste and abuse that auditors discovered and further prevented through their oversight.”

“The Craig/Jarchow bill transfers all legislative oversight of the executive branch and the fraud, waste and abuse hotline to two partisan leaders,” Vinehout said. “Their bill embeds auditors in the agencies making them ripe for corruption by executive staff and partisan leaders.”

Recent audits of economic development programs and Medicaid transportation provided lawmakers with critical and budget timely information. Last year’s audit of the Supervised Release program showed that the Department of Health Services was spending more for inmate transportation than the Department of Corrections.

“Legislative actions should be based on accurate information,” concludes Vinehout. “There are so many examples of how the exemplary and award-winning work of the Legislative Audit Bureau saved taxpayer dollars. All I can ask is why would legislators want do away with the LAB?”

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