



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

## Joint Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:

State Senator Robert Cowles

State Representative Samantha Kerkman

NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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For More Information Contact:  
Senator Cowles ~ 800.334.1465  
Representative Kerkman ~ 888.529.0061

### **Audit Recommends Further Improvements for GAB**

MADISON – Today, the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released report 15-13 on complaints considered by the Government Accountability Board (GAB). In report 15-13, LAB completes audit work it could not finish in report 14-14 because the scope of LAB's work was limited by a July 2014 Attorney General's opinion. Statutory changes introduced by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee and enacted in early 2015 required GAB to provide investigatory records to LAB. Because the confidential nature of these records remained unchanged for purposes of the audit, LAB could not disclose specific information from confidential records, unless permitted by law.

"I am pleased that Act 2 affirmed the Audit Bureau's authority to access and analyze confidential GAB records," said Rep. Samantha Kerkman (R-Salem). "We now have a better picture of the nature of the confidential complaints and GAB handling of complaints."

GAB may investigate alleged violations of election, campaign finance, lobbying, and code of ethics laws. From fiscal year (FY) 2010-11 through FY 2012-13, LAB found an estimated 1,894 complaints were filed with GAB's Elections Division, an estimated 204 inquiries were initiated by GAB's Ethics and Accountability Division, and GAB initiated 21 investigations, including 12 campaign finance investigations, 4 ethics investigations, 4 elections investigations, and 1 lobbying investigation.

Statutes allow GAB to retain special investigators to conduct investigations. GAB staff provided LAB with information on 11 contracts that GAB executed with 9 special investigators from FY 2010-11 through FY 2013-14. Although statutes require staff to provide the names of three qualified individuals if GAB is considering retaining a special investigator, LAB found GAB staff did not consistently do so from FY 2010-11 through FY 2012-13. LAB recommends that GAB's staff comply with statutes and consistently provide GAB with the names of three qualified individuals.

LAB found GAB's staff recently closed 277 complaints filed from FY 2010-11 through FY 2012-13 because they believed no further action was warranted. LAB indicates GAB did so in some instances because the complaints pertained to incidents that had occurred several years ago. LAB recommends that GAB's staff consistently resolve complaints in a timely manner.

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SENATOR COWLES

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-0484 • Fax: (608) 267-0304

REPRESENTATIVE KERKMAN

P.O. Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952  
(608) 266-2530 • Fax (608) 282-3661

“It’s important that complaints filed with the GAB are dealt with in a timely and thorough manner, and that GAB staff and special investigators dealing with citizen complaints substantiate those claims quickly,” said Senator Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay).

LAB reviewed materials and minutes from the closed portions of GAB’s meetings held in FY 2012-13. These materials and minutes indicate that GAB made 21 decisions related to complaints and inquires. Such decisions included, for example, whether to hire a special investigator or dismiss a complaint. The materials and minutes indicate that GAB agreed with 13 staff recommendations, disagreed with 1 staff recommendation, and made 7 decisions in the absence of staff recommendations.

To obtain copies of report 15-13, please visit LAB’s website at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/> or call 608-266-2818. To report fraud, waste, or mismanagement in state government, call LAB’s hotline at 1-877-FRAUD-17.