

AUDITORS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

John C. Geragosian and Clark J. Chapin, *State Auditors*

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Established – 1662

Statutory Authority – Title 2, Chapter 23, Connecticut General Statutes

Central Office – State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

Average Number of Full-Time Employees – 108

Recurring Operating Expenses – \$11,140,491

Organizational Structure – Audit Operations (Compliance, Performance, Information Technology and Whistleblower) and Administration Unit

Mission

The mission of the Auditors of Public Accounts is to:

- Determine whether state agencies and quasi-public agencies comply with applicable state and federal legal requirements
- Determine whether state resources are properly and prudently safeguarded and used
- Attest to the fairness of the state's financial statements and provide a certification thereto
- Perform the annual statewide single audit required by the federal government
- Evaluate the state agencies' economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in using available resources
- Evaluate program results considering costs and benefits through performance audits
- Ensure that all audit results are properly disclosed to management and the public
- Investigate whistleblower matters

Statutory Responsibility

The Auditors of Public Accounts (Auditors) operates under provisions contained in Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-89 through 2-92. As provided for in Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90, the office of the Auditors of Public Accounts is charged with the responsibility of auditing the books and accounts of each officer, department, commission, board, and court of state government as well as all state-aided institutions. In addition, under Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 4-61dd, our office is responsible for reviewing all whistleblower complaints and reporting the results of these reviews to the Attorney General. Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 1-122 requires our office to conduct compliance audits of certain quasi-public agencies and Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90a authorizes our office to audit the trust accounts maintained by state marshals. Finally, Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90 (i) and 10-91g through 10-91i require the Auditors to conduct audits of private providers of special education that receive any state or local funds as a result of providing special education services

to students with an individualized education program or for whom an individual service plan has been completed by the local or regional board of education responsible for educating the student. Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90c charges our office with auditing incentive programs and annual reports submitted by the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development. We issued four related audit reports during the last four fiscal years.

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed Public Act 21-145, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Auditors of Public Accounts. The act changed various statutes related to our office, auditing, and other related topics. Among other things, the act:

- explicitly prohibits state agencies from denying the Auditors access to their records or accounts
- requires certain new or amended state contracts to contain a provision allowing the agency to access any relevant data upon demand, at no additional cost, in the agency's prescribed format and allows the Auditors access to this data when auditing the agency;
- requires state agencies to notify the auditors at least 15 days before contracting for auditing services and prohibits agencies from entering these contracts until the Auditors advise whether it can perform the work instead;
- specifies that private providers of special education services are subject to auditing requirements regardless of whether they directly or indirectly receive state or local funds;
- eliminates provisions requiring the Auditors to approve an annual report by the Connecticut Retirement Security Authority and authorizing the Auditors to prescribe the authority's accounting methods and rendering of periodical reports;
- reduces, from 120 days to 60 days, the time by which a municipality must notify the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) of its intention to acquire surplus state property and reduces from 60 days to 30 days the maximum extension that DAS may grant on this deadline;
- conforms certain quasi-public statutes to the general biennial audit requirement;
- extends ethics code provisions on prohibited activities that apply to state-hired consultants and independent contractors to their employees;
- requires DAS, when reviewing final plans any phase of a school building project for conformity with certain requirements (e.g., the State Building Code), to also review them for conformity with school safety infrastructure criteria;
- replaces references to the Office of the Ombudsman within the Department of Children and Families with its Office of Community Relations; and
- repeals a provision requiring the Auditors to audit Bradley Enterprise Fund reimbursements to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.

The act also makes technical and conforming changes.

During the 2019 legislative session, the General Assembly passed Public Act 19-10, establishing a reward program for state employees who report wasteful practices in their agencies. Subsection (c) of the act requires our office to verify identified cost savings calculations by state agencies related to the program. Our office has not received any verification requests to date.

During the 2018 legislative session, the General Assembly passed three bills that our office supported. Public Act 18-183, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Auditors of Public Accounts Concerning Private Providers of Special Education, requires a local or regional board of education to have a written contract, rather than an agreement as under prior law, with a private special education provider in order to receive state reimbursement grants for special education costs (known as the excess cost grant). Under the excess cost grant program, the state reimburses a board when the cost of a student's special education services exceeds four and a half times the average per pupil educational cost of that school district. Under existing law, districts must follow certain requirements when they choose to enter into an agreement for private special education services. The act requires such agreements to include an explanation of how the provider calculates its tuition or costs for services. The act establishes the same requirement for any (1) agreement entered into or amended on or after July 1, 2018, but before June 30, 2019, and (2) contract entered into or amended on or after July 1, 2019. The act also requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to develop standards and a process for documenting special education services provided by private providers that include the use of standard forms or other electronic reporting systems. It also requires any private provider providing special education services for a local or regional board of education to annually submit its operating budget to SDE. We continue to perform reviews on special education providers.

Public Service

The Auditors of Public Accounts functions as an independent watchdog of all state and quasi-public agencies for the General Assembly, the public, and the news media. As the only legislative branch agency embedded in many executive branch agencies, our office provides independent, unbiased and objective opinions and recommendations on the operation of state government and the state's effectiveness in safeguarding resources. Our office strives to assist state agencies in achieving effective fiscal management. Furthermore, we report on the integrity of the state's financial statements and whether state and federal funds are used in compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Our office determines whether these agencies are following laws, regulations, internal policies, and prudent business practices. Through our work on the Statewide Single Audit, our office determines whether state agencies are following federal requirements on major federal programs. We determine whether state programs and systems are operating efficiently and effectively by way of our performance audits and program reviews. Finally, our office receives and reviews whistleblower complaints from state employees and the public in order to detect waste, fraud, and abuse and to prevent future occurrences of such.

In addition, our website (<https://wp.cga.ct.gov/apa/>) contains all relevant information about our office. It also contains links to electronic copies of over 1,000 different reports for members of the public and other interested parties to view or download. We recently updated our website to better serve our stakeholders (decision makers, the public, and media).

Improvements/Achievements during 2020-2021

Performance audits are an examination of a program, function, operation, or the management systems and procedures of a governmental or non-profit entity to assess whether the entity is achieving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the employment of available resources. Performance audits can be a valuable tool for the state by measuring the extent to which a program is achieving its goals and objectives; determining whether alternative approaches would yield better program performance; determining ways to save state resources; and determining the extent to which programs duplicate, overlap, or conflict with other programs. As the state endeavors to find ways to operate more efficiently, performance audits could serve as a useful tool to preserve state resources and improve state services.

We issued the following performance audits during the past fiscal year: Connecticut Prescription Monitoring Program, Oversight of Pre-Need Funeral Service Contracts, The Department of Public Health's Monitoring of Public Water Systems and Enforcement of Drinking Water Laws (Follow-Up Report),

We are extremely pleased to report that our office was recognized recently with a National Legislative Program Evaluation Society (NLPES) Certificate of Impact award by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) for our Department of Social Services and Veyo Non-Emergency Medical Transportation report issued in February 2020. NLPES Certificates of Impact are presented to legislative offices that issued evaluations or audit reports, that resulted in documented public policy changes, program improvements, dollar savings or other public impacts.

Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 3-37 (a) requires the State Treasurer to submit a final audited report to the Governor and the Investment Advisory Council on or before December 31st annually. Our office continues to provide an audit certification for the Treasurer's Annual Report on this timetable. In addition, in connection with the audits of the Offices of the State Comptroller and State Treasurer, our office continues to provide special audit services in connection with the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the Combined Investment Funds, and the Short-Term Investment Fund. Other requests for audit services continue to be met in a professional and timely manner without the need for outside professional assistance.

Our office's higher education audit group continues to provide audit certification to the financial statements of the University of Connecticut and the University of Connecticut Health Center. Our office conducts this work rather than the university contracting with outside accounting firms. In addition, our office has continued to offer services for special audits required under NCAA rules and foundation audits, upon request, as permitted by Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 4-37f (8). During the past year, such reviews included audits of the Charter Oak State College Foundation, Connecticut Mental Health Center Foundation, Connecticut Heritage Foundation, Inc., Governor's Residence Conservancy, Inc., as well as National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) agreed-upon procedures engagements at Central Connecticut State University.

Generally accepted government auditing standards require that audit agencies undergo an external quality control review assessment at least once every three years. To comply with this requirement, our office participates in a peer review program sponsored by the National State Auditors Association. Under this program, a team of auditors from other state government audit organizations comes to our office and conducts a review of our quality control procedures to determine whether such procedures are sufficient to ensure that all audits performed by our office during the review period are conducted in accordance with professional auditing standards.

Our peer review under this program, covering the 2018-2019 fiscal year, was successfully completed during August of 2019. Audit organizations may receive a rating of Pass, Pass with Deficiencies, or Fail. Our office received the highest rating of Pass. Our participation in this program has not only resulted in realized cost savings to our agency, but also has given us an opportunity to learn about the best practices employed by other state audit organizations in carrying out their audit missions. In the years between external peer reviews, we perform annual internal reviews of our operations. Our next external peer review will be conducted in 2022.

As a governmental audit organization, we participate in various professional organizations involved in governmental auditing. On the national level, we are active with the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers (NASACT) and the National State Auditors Association (NSAA). We serve on various NASACT and NSAA committees. We are also active with the New England Intergovernmental Audit Forum (NEIAF). These affiliations enable our office to stay informed about developments in the auditing profession in addition to providing educational and valuable information-sharing opportunities for our employees.

Our office also has offered support and encouragement to employees who have expressed an interest in serving professional audit organizations in various capacities. During 2020-2021, a member of our management team and one of our audit supervisors served on the Governmental Accounting and Auditing Committee of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants (CTCPA.) In addition, a number of our staff served on National State Auditors Association committees during the year, while one of our audit supervisors participated on a team conducting a peer review of the state auditor's office in Virginia.

Future Goals

Our future goals include expanding the services we provide to the General Assembly in three major areas: more effective use and evaluation of information technology in our audit work, additional performance auditing engagements, and enhancing external communications.

Technology is an integral part of state operations. State agencies use technology in all facets of government, including accounting, inventory, payroll, purchasing, storage, and the delivery of front-line services. In response to this, our office will continue to improve how we evaluate and use technology.

We must enhance how we evaluate the state's information technology structure for its effectiveness and determine whether state systems adequately maintain the integrity of data, protect against breaches of privacy, and ensure there are proper safeguards to protect against fraud.

We must increase our ability to analyze the state's information technology systems, particularly in the areas of procurement, operability, and security. To achieve this goal, we intend to expand our commitment and focus in this area.

The other area of technology we are developing is the use of data analytics in our auditing. Using data analytics will greatly improve our efforts to detect waste, fraud, and abuse. Traditional auditing utilizes sampling to determine auditing issues. As an example, auditors might look at a sample of certain transactions. The use of data analytics enables auditors to look at the entire universe of those transactions, which allows them to improve focus on riskier areas and detect anomalies that will further assist in identifying waste, fraud, or abuse.

The second goal for our office is to conduct additional performance audits. An invaluable tool, performance audits help determine whether a program is achieving its goals and objectives; whether alternative approaches would yield better program performance; ways to save state resources; and the extent to which programs duplicate, overlap, or conflict with other programs. As the state endeavors to find ways to operate more efficiently, performance audits serve as a useful tool to preserve state resources and improve state services.

The third goal for our office is to modernize our external communications. Our auditors do fantastic work, but our means of informing our stakeholders requires updating.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90, 2-92, and 4-61dd contain the various reporting requirements applicable to the Auditors of Public Accounts. A description of the reports issued by our office pursuant to these provisions is described below:

All audit reports released by our office are issued pursuant to our audit authority as set forth in Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-90. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, our office issued 61 audit reports and special reports. These included 60 financial-compliance audits of various state and quasi-public agencies and our annual report to the General Assembly. Each year we also issue a statewide single audit report for the State of Connecticut. It should be noted that this audit was required as a condition of the state receiving approximately \$9,766,000,000 in federal financial assistance for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government extended the single audit submission deadline to September 30, 2021 for the audit covering the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020. We will complete the single audit and submit it well before the deadline.

There were 488 recommendations in the 60 audit reports issued during the year. These reports also included a review of the implementation of recommendations made during the prior audit. For reports issued during the 2020-2021 fiscal year, agencies implemented or otherwise resolved 40 percent of all prior audit recommendations.

Pursuant to the provisions of Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 2-92, our office annually presents a report on its operations to the General Assembly by February 1st of each year. Included in this

report are recommendations concerning areas in which it appears that statutory revisions or additional legislative actions are desirable. In our latest annual report, 11 such recommendations were presented to the General Assembly for consideration.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, our office received 48 whistleblower complaints. Pursuant to the provisions of Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 4-61dd (d), a report on the status of these complaints was forwarded to the clerk of each house of the General Assembly on July 13, 2021.