

SUBJECT: Requiring power management software for state agencies and universities

COMMITTEE: Government Reform — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Callegari, Pitts, Leibowitz, Miles, W. Smith

0 nays

2 absent — Berman, Rodriguez

WITNESSES: For — Charles Wise, Verdiem Corp.; Albert Cortez; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter of Sierra Club; Tom “Smitty” Smith, Public Citizen)

Against — None

On — Dub Taylor, State Energy Conservation Office; Allan Martin, Department of Information Resources

BACKGROUND: Almost 40 years ago, the Legislature began to develop policies about state agency management of information resources and have assigned various regulatory agencies the responsibility for reviewing information resources expenditures. In 1989, the 71st Legislature created the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to coordinate information resources management and training for all state agencies.

- Government Code, sec. 2054.121 requires the Information Technology Council for Higher Education to coordinate use of information technologies at state universities.

Government Code, sec. 2054.121(c) requires that any proposed information technology rule for institutions of higher education be evaluated by the Information Technology Council for Higher Education to determine its effect on the mission of higher education, student populations, or federal grant requirements and whether an alternative approach to implementation or exemption from the rule should be adopted.

DIGEST:

CSHB 66 would amend Government Code, ch. 2054 to require DIR to evaluate available power management software that could reduce energy use by state computer networks and networked personal computers. DIR would be required to determine if use of the software would be technically feasible for state agencies. If it determined that a state agency would benefit from the software, DIR would purchase, lease, or acquire the power management software during fiscal 2008-09. This provision would expire on September 1, 2009.

After consulting with the Information Technology Council for Higher Education, DIR also would determine whether state university systems should be required to purchase, lease, or acquire software to manage energy for their computers and computer networks. Any proposal would be subject to review under Government Code, sec. 2054.121(c), and the analysis would have to include an assessment of how installation of the software would affect security of electronic data, including data collected by universities protected by law from public disclosure.

The bill would take effect on September 1, 2007.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 66 would require DIR to investigate the installation of readily available energy management software that could result in significant savings in electricity costs for Texas taxpayers. State agencies operate 109,000 networked personal computers, and state universities have another 193,000 computers. Annual energy costs average \$20 to \$70 for each of these computers. However, power usage could be reduced up to 50 percent by software that costs \$20 to \$25 per computer. Installing the software would pay for itself in two years in reduced energy costs, and the savings could be even greater than the \$2 million a year projected by the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) in the fiscal note. Actual savings would increase if energy costs increased, and the state would realize those savings in years to come. In addition, the bill would help the state set an example in energy conservation efforts.

CSHB 66 would provide DIR flexibility in recommending different types of energy management software and would not commit the state to select only one vendor or product. Power management software should be acquired only if it is compatible with an agency's hardware, and only if it would allow cost recovery within the next two fiscal years.

A pilot project on energy management software at one state agency

demonstrated how effective a centralized power management program can be in saving energy. Centralized power management programs allow for measured and verifiable records of savings and prove to be more effective than merely asking users to turn off computers when they leave work or scripted one-size-fits-all programs that turn off computers when certain conditions are met. Various power management programs work with existing power saving features of computers and networks and would enhance the ability to gain more energy savings.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Actual savings to the state from using energy management software would be uncertain because individual state agencies and universities already may have implemented effective energy savings plans. Existing computers and networks already have energy savings features. Purchase of additional software would cost money, and there would be additional expenses related to installation and administration of the programs. Adding a process to record and verify projected savings could negate what benefits might be achieved by an energy savings program.

CSHB 66 threatens to create its own “one-size-fits-all” approach that might not consider all the variation in computer use among different employees across state agencies. Some employees, for example, do not shut off their computers because they need access when they work from home, and other employees work unusual hours, including weekends and holidays.

NOTES:

According to the LBB, CSHB 66 would save the state \$3.8 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09 and \$2.2 million in each fiscal year thereafter.

The committee substitute differs from the original in that it would require DIR to work with the Information Technology Council for Higher Education to develop a power management software program for state universities.

A similar bill, HB 2442 by Leibowitz, was reported favorably by the House Government Reform Committee in 2005, but died in the House Calendars Committee.