Bill as Introduced

SB 256 - AS INTRODUCED

2012 SESSION

12-2945 09/05

SENATE BILL

256

AN ACT

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

SPONSORS:

Sen. Lambert, Dist 13; Sen. Barnes, Jr., Dist 17; Sen. Carson, Dist 14;

Sen. Gallus, Dist 1; Sen. Luther, Dist 12; Sen. Sanborn, Dist 7; Rep. Cali-Pitts,

Rock 16

COMMITTEE:

Executive Departments and Administration

ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council and the fiscal committee of the general court.

Explanation:

Matter added to current law appears in bold italics.

Matter removed from current law appears [in brackets and struckthrough.]

Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twelve

AN ACT

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 Public Utilities Commission; Contracts With Consultants. Amend RSA 363:22 to read as 1 2 follows: 363:22 Investigations. The commission may investigate all existing or proposed interstate rates, 3 fares, charges, classifications and rules and regulations relating thereto, where any act thereunder 4 may take place within this state. The commission shall not enter into a contract with a 5 consultant to provide technical assistance in any proceeding without the prior approval of 6 7 the governor and council and the fiscal committee of the general court. 2 Public Utilities Commission; Contracts With Consultants. Amend RSA 374:5-a to read as 8 9 follows: 374:5-a Power to Hire Consultants Firm. Upon the approval of the governor and council 10 and the fiscal committee of the general court, the commission may utilize and employ a 11 consultant firm to provide it with technical assistance in evaluating cost factors relating to the 12 effective use of substantial investments of utilities regulated by the commission. 13 3 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage. 14

SB 256 – AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

03/21/12 1165s

2012 SESSION

12-2945 09/05

SENATE BILL

256

AN ACT

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

SPONSORS:

Sen. Lambert, Dist 13; Sen. Barnes, Jr., Dist 17; Sen. Carson, Dist 14;

Sen. Gallus, Dist 1; Sen. Luther, Dist 12; Sen. Sanborn, Dist 7; Rep. Cali-Pitts,

Rock 16

COMMITTEE:

Executive Departments and Administration

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council.

Explanation:

Matter added to current law appears in bold italics.

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Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

SB 256 - AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

03/21/12 1165s

12-2945 09/05

Amend

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twelve

AN ACT

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relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

New Paragraph; Public Utilities Commission Contracts With Consultants.

- 2 RSA 365:37 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraph: III. For investigations or proceedings involving the acquisition, merger, transfer, sale, or 3 lease of the works or system of a public utility, the commission shall not enter into a contract with 4 experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$250,000, including any contract 5 6 extension, without the approval of the governor and council. For all other investigations or proceedings, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other 7 8 assistants in an amount greater than \$100,000, including any contract extension, without the 9 approval of governor and council.
 - 2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

CHAPTER 131 SB 256 – FINAL VERSION

03/21/12 1165s

2012 SESSION

12-2945 09/05

SENATE BILL

256

AN ACT

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

SPONSORS:

Sen. Lambert, Dist 13; Sen. Barnes, Jr., Dist 17; Sen. Carson, Dist 14;

Sen. Gallus, Dist 1; Sen. Luther, Dist 12; Sen. Sanborn, Dist 7; Rep. Cali-Pitts,

Rock 16

COMMITTEE:

Executive Departments and Administration

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council.

Explanation:

Matter added to current law appears in bold italics.

Matter removed from current law appears [in brackets and struckthrough-]

Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

CHAPTER 131 SB 256 – FINAL VERSION

03/21/12 1165s

12-2945 09/05

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twelve

AN ACT

1

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

New Paragraph; Public Utilities Commission Contracts With Consultants. Amend

- 2 RSA 365:37 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraph: III. For investigations or proceedings involving the acquisition, merger, transfer, sale, or 3 lease of the works or system of a public utility, the commission shall not enter into a contract with 4 experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$250,000, including any contract 5 extension, without the approval of the governor and council. For all other investigations or 6 7 proceedings, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$100,000, including any contract extension, without the 8 9 approval of governor and council.
- 10 131:2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.
- 11 Approved: June 5, 2012
- 12 Effective Date: June 5, 2012

Amendments

Sen. Carson, Dist. 14 January 18, 2012 2012-0275s 09/04

Amendment to SB 256

1	Amend the title of the bill by replacing it with the following:
2	
3	AN ACT relative to public utilities commission contracts with experts and consultants.
4	
5	Amend the bill by replacing all after the enacting clause with the following:
6	
7	1 New Section; Public Utilities Commission; Approval of Contracts With Experts and
8	Consultants. Amend RSA 363 by inserting after section 28-a the following new section:
9	363:28-b Approval of Contracts With Experts and Consultants. Notwithstanding any other
10	provision of law, the commission shall not employ any expert or consultant to provide the
11	commission with technical assistance in any proceeding or other capacity, unless the contract or
12	amendments to the contract with such expert or consultant receive the prior approval of the governor
13	and council.
14	2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Amendment to SB 256 - Page 2 -

2012-0275s

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts and amendments to contracts with experts and consultants be approved by the governor and council.

Sen. Carson, Dist. 14 January 24, 2012 2012-0355s 09/04

Amendment to SB 256

Amend the bill by r	eplacing all after th	e enacting clause	with the following
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1 New Paragraph; Public Utilities Commission Contracts With Consultants. Amend RSA 365:37 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraph:

III. For investigations or proceedings involving the acquisition, merger, transfer, sale, or lease of the works or system of a public utility, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$500,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of the governor and council. For all other investigations or proceedings, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$250,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of governor and council.

2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Amendment to SB 256 - Page 2 -

2012-0355s

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council.

Sen. Lambert, Dist. 13 February 1, 2012 2012-0533s 09/04

Amendment to SB 256

1	Amend the title of the bill by replacing it with the following:
2	
3	AN ACT relative to public utilities commission contracts with experts and consultants.
4	
5	Amend the bill by replacing all after the enacting clause with the following:
6	
7	1 New Section; Public Utilities Commission; Approval of Contracts With Experts and
8	Consultants. Amend RSA 363 by inserting after section 28-a the following new section:
9	363:28-b Approval of Contracts With Experts and Consultants. Notwithstanding any other
10	provision of law, the commission shall not employ any expert or consultant to provide the
11	commission with technical assistance in any proceeding or other capacity, unless the contract or
12	amendments to the contract with such expert or consultant receive the prior approval of the governor
13	and council. This section shall not apply to any contract or potential or actual amendments to a
14	contract, with a total value billed back to the utility of less than \$50,000.
15	2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Amendment to SB 256 - Page 2 -

2012-0533s

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts and amendments to contracts with experts and consultants be approved by the governor and council.



Senate Executive Departments and Administration March 8, 2012 2012-1165s 01/04

Amendment to SB 256

l Am	end the bil	l by replacir	g all after	the enacting	clause with	the following:
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11 12 1 New Paragraph; Public Utilities Commission Contracts With Consultants. Amend RSA 365:37 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraph:

III. For investigations or proceedings involving the acquisition, merger, transfer, sale, or lease of the works or system of a public utility, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$250,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of the governor and council. For all other investigations or proceedings, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$100,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of governor and council.

2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Amendment to SB 256 - Page 2 -



2012-1165s

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council.

Committee Minutes

Printed: 12/23/2011 at 11:42 am

SENATE CALENDAR NOTICE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Senator Sharon Carson Chairman Senator Fenton Groen V Chairman Senator Sylvia Larsen Senator Jim Luther July Senator Raymond White

For Use by Senate Clerk's Office ONLY				
Bill Status				
Docket				
Calendar				
Proof: Calendar Bill Status				

Date: December 23, 2011

HEARINGS

		Thursday	1/12/2012	
EXECUTI	VE DEPART!	MENTS AND ADMINISTRATION	SH 100	9:00 AM
(Name of C	Committee)		(Place)	(Time)
		EXECUTIVE SESSION	N MAY FOLLOW	
9:00 AM	SB211	relative to the board of registra	tion of funeral directors and	d embalmers.
9:15 AM	SB226	transferring the administration certification.	of the electricians' board to	the joint board for licensure and
9:30 AM	SB234-FN	relative to salary grade for cert	ain positions.	
9:50 AM	SB239	relative to the powers and duti	es of the installation standa	rds board.
10:05 AM	SB256	relative to public utilities comm	nission contracts with consu	ltants.
10:25 AM SB259 relative to the appointment of within the Pease development				bors and relative to transfer of land
Sponsors	<u>:</u>			
SB211 Sen. Lou D	'Allesandro	Sen. Sylvia Larsen	Rep. Daniel Sullivan	
SB226 Sen. Lou D'Allesandro SB234-FN		Rep. Kenneth Hawkins	Rep. Gene Chandler	
Sen. Lou D	•	Sen. Gary Lambert		
SB239 Sen. Sharor	Carcon	Sen. John Barnes, Jr.	Sen. Tom De Blois	Rep. Andrew Renzullo
Rep. Lynne		Rep. Marshall Quandt	Rep. Matt Quandt	Rep. Jennifer Coffey
SB256	000.	rop. Marshan Quanti	p Quantus	
Sen. Gary I	ambert	Sen. John Barnes, Jr.	Sen. Sharon Carson	Sen. John Gallus
Sen. Jim Lu		Sen. Andy Sanborn	Rep. Jacqueline Cali-Pitts	
SB259				
Sen. Chuck	Morse	Sen. Nancy Stiles	Rep. Edwin Smith	Rep. Gene Chandler

Executive Dept. and Administration Committee

Hearing Report

TO:

Members of the Senate

FROM:

Deb Chroniak, Legislative Aide

RE:

Hearing report on SB 256 - relative to public utilities

commission contracts with consultants.

HEARING DATE:

January 12, 2012

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT: Senator Sharon Carson,

(Dist. 14); Senator Fenton Groen, (Dist. 6); Senator Raymond

White (Dist. 9), Senator Sylvia Larsen (Dist. 15).

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT: Senator Jim Luther,

(Dist. 12) (sick)

Sponsor(s): Sen. Lambert, Dist 13; Sen. Barnes, Jr., Dist 17; Sen. Carson,

Dist 14; Sen. Gallus, Dist 1; Sen. Luther, Dist 12; Sen.

Sanborn, Dist 7; Rep. Cali-Pitts, Rock 16

What the bill does: This bill requires that certain public utilities commission contracts with consultants be approved by the governor and council and the fiscal committee of the general court.

Who supports the bill: Sen. Lambert, Dist 13, Sen. Barnes, Jr., Dist 17, Sen. Carson, Dist. 14, Sen. Gallus, Dist 1, Sen. Luther, Dist. 12, Sen. Sanborn, Dist 7, Rep. Cali-Pitts, Rock 16

Who opposes the bill: Commissioner Tom Getz, PUC.

Summary of testimony received:

- The Vice Chair, Senator Groen opened the hearing on SB 256 at 10:30 a.m. and called on the Senator Sharon Carson to provide testimony.
- Senator Carson introduced SB 256 relative to the Public Utilities Commission contracts with consultants.

- Commission Tom Getz, (in opposition) Chairman of the Public Utility Commission spoke on the proposed SB 256 stating that the Commission is opposed to this legislation and that there were three issues.
- He went on to explain the process for how the PUC use consultants and what the Commission normally does. In regard to the PUC, under RSA 365-37 Roman II of statute, whenever the PUC hires a consultant this statute is referred to as their special assessment power.
- The PUC has a general assessment power each year they impose an assessment on all public utilities to overall revenues which will contribute to their overall budget. Approximately, \$8.5 million was last year's budget.
- Under consideration is the special assessment power. The PUC has a process where the staff recommends they engage a consultant that has a specific type of expertise, which bolsters their resources with special expertise or additional resources on a case-by-case basis. They recommend we issue an RFP to require some type of expertise. The RFP is issued out and includes written criteria, includes section on potential conflicts of interest, etc. The staff then reviews all RFPs and gives their recommendations to the Commission, who in turn, works with the Department of Justice for their form and execution of contracts.
- Expenditures on consultant contracts can be as low as \$75,000 and up towards \$1.2 million as with Fair Point/Verizon acquisition, Chapter 11 and other ongoing aspects. Generally this is how the process works.
- In respect to the three sets of concerns: First, is the independence of the Commission and how to do its job efficiently and efficiently. Years ago, the Legislature ruled the PUC would be independent with no political influence in selecting consultants that could be used in a case.
- The proposed legislation adds two steps one through Governor and Council, and one through Fiscal where there would be an opportunity to review. There is concern with the interaction of these two additional steps.
- Once the PUC has a case, they usually start with a filing, a procedural hearing, testimony, determine how to conduct the case, look to whether they need consultants or not, possibly add some time in, and it is hard to tell how much time and how it would play out with these new additional requirements for approvals.
- There is a concern technically with the statute the way it is written stating that the particular amendments are amending the wrong portions of the statute.

- Under RSA 374:5-a discussed the Power to Hire Consultants. This section is a small subset of what the PUC does. Also, under RSA 363:22, Investigations, where it indicates that the Commission may investigate all existing or proposed interstate rates, it is not clear of what the intent of the statute is in this bill.
- Commissioner Getz had a short conversation with Senator Lambert, prime sponsor of the bill, and one issue he mentioned was a contract for about \$120,000, but then was amended to add additional expenditures of \$40,000 which was necessary to do additional work because the utility did, in that case, not have the data needed in proceeding. It is hard to know what the specifics are. The PUC is willing to work with the sponsor, the utilities, and with specific issues, i.e., what the goals are, and some other way to get there without unintended consequences. Again, what the utilities have what specific concerns so that we can remedy those.
- Senator White stated that he could understand, and that it was clear to him what the intent was, and that was the concern that both legislators and utilities share and that was the PUC has a blank check to do what they want without checks and balances, and to assess utilities completely. What they are looking for are checks and balances.
- Commissioner Getz stated that theoretically, yes the issue could be there about how the PCU is doing things, but also stated that he believes this approach is not the way to get there. He defends the decisions they have made; as long as he has been Chair, there has not been any misuse of the power that the PUC has.
- Is there a way to do this correctly that balances the Commissions independence with the concern about checks and balances?
- Senator White talked about the PUCs independence and the Governor and Council process, and his idea of a potential solution would be a threshold amount. For example, if the PUC goes over \$100,000 or \$150,000 then it will go to the Governor and Council and anything above that amount. Below that amount the PUC makes the decision.
- Commissioner Getz stated that could work on big ticket items, and when you have the more day to day items where you want to hire a return on equity consultant on a natural gas case stating that there are certain levels for certain kinds of cases.
- Senator Groen stated that would be the approval of Governor and Council and the Fiscal Committee and asked if these costs are passed on to the ratepayers.

- Commissioner Getz stated not necessarily and that it would depend on the utility, and also it would depend on the request. In ratemaking, the rates are set and the utility, over time, collects its rates. There is no particular surcharge for a special assessment to permit utilities to recover dollar for dollar for these costs. So it would go into their overhead. It differs by industry; one thing in electric and one thing in telecom.
- Senator Groen asked if there was no cost to the state budget; Commissioner Getz indicated no.
- Ellen Scarponi of Fair Point Communications testified next stating that she was representing a utility which was much affected by the contracts and extensions. Her concern is that the cost will be passed on to ratepayers, or that costs on contracts cannot be used on broadband or new services that can be brought to the state.
- Ms. Scarponi has offered Senator Lambert amendment recommendations which would make the bill more comprehensive and would affect RSA 363:22, which would add more comprehension.
- She is not seeking to limit the PUC's ability, but feels there should be some oversight. She stated that contracts are negotiated and extensions agreed upon and the utility has to pay for these additional costs, and that could relate to a 40%-50% increase, which would have triggered that originally, but won't if a dollar amount is put in place.
- Senator White asked what if you need consultants and you feel you don't. Do you have an avenue to call and question this need? Ms. Scarponi stated, not to her knowledge.
- Senator Groen asked about the costs incurred and if they were passed back to a specific utility which it relates to, and was there any markup to the cost or directly to the cost?
- Ms. Scarponi stated that an RFP is awarded to the consultant and if there is an extension there is no recourse in that, which is an increased cost, which the utility is not expecting, nor has budgeted for these additional charges.
- Senator Groen then talked about thresholds and if there were any ideas on an annual threshold for contracts. Ms. Scarponi stated that she was not advocating for thresholds at all.

The hearing closed at 10:55 a.m.

Funding: Not Applicable.

The Committee took the bill under advisement. Action:

DAC [file: SB 256 report] Date: January 15, 2012

Speakers

SENATE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Date: January 12, 2012 Time: 10:05 a.m. Public Hearing on SB 256

SB 256 - relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Please check box Please check is			
SPEAKING FAVO		NAME (Please print)	REPRESENTING
	SENATO	OR JAK BARNES	
	SENATI	OR JOHN GALLUS	SD #1
	1 X Chair	man Tom Gotz	PUC
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	(DBb)	Dunn	Mashua Chamber
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SENATE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION **COMMITTEE**

Date: January 12, 2012 Time: 10:05 a.m. Public Hearing on SB 256

 $SB\ 256$ - relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Please che Please ch		that apply:				
SPEAKING		PPOSED		NAME (Pleas		REPRESENTING
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Committee Report

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

SENATE

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

FOR THE CONSENT CALENDAR

Date: March 8, 2012

THE COMMITTEE ON Executive Departments and Administration to which was referred Senate Bill 256

AN ACT

relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Having considered the same, the committee recommends that the Bill:

OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT

BY A VOTE OF: 5-0

AMENDMENT # 1165s

CONSENT CALENDAR VOTE: 5-0

Senator Sharon M. Carson for the Committee

This bill requires that for investigations or proceedings involving the acquisition, merger, transfer, sale, or lease of the works or system of a public utility, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$250,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of the governor and council. For all other investigations or proceedings, the commission shall not enter into a contract with experts, accountants, or other assistants in an amount greater than \$100,000, including any contract extension, without the approval of governor and council.

Deb Chroniak 271-1403

New Hampshire General Court - Bill Status System

Docket of SB256

Docket Abbreviations

Bill Title: relative to public utilities commission contracts with consultants.

Official Docket of SB256:

Date	Body	Description
1/1/2012	S	Introduced 1/4/2012 and Referred to Executive Departments and Administration; SJ 1 , Pg.6
1/1/2012	S	Hearing: 1/12/12, Room 100, SH, 10:05 a.m; SC1
3/9/2012	S	Committee Report: Ought to Pass with Amendment #2012-1165s , 3/21/12; Vote 5-0; CC; SC11
3/21/2012	S	Committee Amendment 1165s; AA, VV
3/21/2012	S	Ought to Pass with Amendment 1165s, MA, VV; OT3rdg
3/21/2012	Н	Introduced and Referred to Science, Technology and Energy; HJ 28 , PG.1719
3/29/2012	Н	Public Hearing: 4/5/2012 9:00 AM LOB 304
4/11/2012	Н	Executive Session: 4/17/2012 10:15 AM LOB 304
4/18/2012	Н	Committee Report: Ought to Pass for April 25 (Vote 11-2; RC); HC 33 , PG.1926
4/25/2012	Н	Ought to Pass: MA VV; HJ 38, PG.2177
4/25/2012	Н	Referred to Executive Departments and Administration; HJ 38, PG.2177
5/1/2012	Н	Public Hearing: 5/8/2012 11:30 AM LOB 306
5/1/2012	Н	Executive Session: 5/8/2012 2:00 PM LOB 306
5/9/2012	Н	Committee Report: Ought to Pass for May 15 (Vote 12-0; CC); HC 37 , PG.2032
5/15/2012	Н	Ought to Pass: MA VV; HJ 43, PG.2286
5/23/2012	S	Enrolled
5/30/2012	Н	Enrolled [Recessed from 5/17/2012 Session]
6/5/2012	S	Signed by the Governor on 06/05/2012; Chapter 0131; Effective 06/05/2012

NH House	NH Senate

Other Referrals

COMMITTEE REPORT FILE INVENTORY

SB256 ORIGINAL REFERRAL RE-REFERRAL

1. This inventory is to be signed and dated by the Committee Aide and placed INSIDE THE FOLDER AS THE FIRST ITEM IN THE COMMITTEE FILE. 2. PLACE ALL DOCUMENTS IN THE FOLDER FOLLOWING THE INVENTORY IN THE ORDER LISTED. 3. THE DOCUMENTS WHICH HAVE AN "X" BESIDE THEM ARE CONFIRMED AS BEING IN THE FOLDER. 4. THE COMPLETED FILE IS THEN DELIVERED TO THE CALENDAR CLERK. DOCKET (Submit only the latest docket found in Bill Status) COMMITTEE REPORT CALENDAR NOTICE HEARING REPORT HANDOUTS FROM THE PUBLIC HEARING PREPARED TESTIMONY AND OTHER SUBMISSIONS SIGN-UP SHEET(S) ALL AMENDMENTS (passed or not) CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE: ✓- AMENDMENT # 02755 - AMENDMENT # 0355 ✓ - AMENDMENT# 1169 ALL AVAILABLE VERSIONS OF THE BILL: AS INTRODUCED AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE FINAL VERSION OTHER (Anything else deemed important but not listed above, such as amended fiscal notes): DATE DELIVERED TO SENATE CLERK 6-36-13