
High School League Has Made Significant Progress in Addressing Past Problems

SUMMARY

The Minnesota State High School League's bylaws, policies, and practices are generally consistent with statutes that govern its activities and they ensure a satisfactory degree of public accountability, according to a report issued by the Legislative Auditor's Office. Although the study found several minor problems, such as a lack of competitive bidding for some purchasing decisions, different starting dates for the terms of board members, inconsistency in some bylaws and policies, and a lack of clarity in the role of its ombudspersons, the report points out that the League has made major progress in addressing issues of concern that were identified in past evaluation reports.

The Minnesota State High School League is a nonprofit voluntary association of high schools. Its power to regulate student activities, however, gives it an authority closely akin to government and creates an expectation that, like government, it will be accountable to the public. Responding to continuing legislative interest in the League, the Legislative Auditor examined the League's

accountability structure, its policy making processes, and the legal framework within which it operates.

Program Evaluation Report
**Minnesota State
High School League**
June 18, 1998

Key Findings:

- League bylaws, policies, and practices are generally consistent with applicable statutes.
- League rulemaking procedures generally promote public accountability.
- Despite League efforts, public involvement in rulemaking has been minimal.
- League documents that identify bylaws and policies sometimes contradict one another.

Recommendations:

- The Legislature should consider giving the State Auditor's Office more flexibility in conducting League audits.
- The Legislature should consider expanding the oversight authority of the Department of Children, Families & Learning.
- The League should better define the roles and responsibilities of its ombudspersons and publicize their availability.

*The report is available at our web site:
<http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/pe9807.htm>.
Copies of the full report or summary are also available
by calling 612/296-4708.*

The League is not a state agency, but state laws sometimes require it to comply with the same statutes that govern state boards or agencies, including appointing and compensating governing board members, reimbursing the expenses of board members and staff, holding open meetings, and complying with the Data Practices Act. In other instances, the League must comply with statutes regarding hiring, ethical practices, auditing, budgeting and accounting, and rulemaking that are different from those that govern state agencies or boards. The study found that the League is generally in compliance with these laws.

Although the League's rulemaking process differs markedly from that of state agencies, the study indicated that the League has responded to public criticism by trying to increase public

involvement in rulemaking. For example, it created an 18-member student advisory committee and began to hold area meetings

throughout the state to share information about itself and to gather input from school staff, interested citizens, and others. Finally, the study revealed that most of the League's constituent groups said that they are satisfied with its overall methods of operation.

The League regulates student participation in certain extracurricular activities and exercises functions that are essentially governmental in nature. Consequently, the report stresses the need for an effective mechanism to monitor and oversee League activities. While the State Auditor's Office has consistently fulfilled its statutory role in overseeing the League's financial matters, Legislative Auditor staff found that the Department of Children, Families &

Learning has just recently begun to fulfill its existing oversight responsibilities. The report recommends expanding the department's authority to oversee League activities to ensure that the League remains accountable to its diverse constituencies and the public. It also recommends giving the State Auditor greater discretion in conducting financial audits of the League and requiring that all League board members begin their terms on August 1.

Copies of the report, entitled *Minnesota State High School League*, may be obtained from the Office of the Legislative Auditor at 612/296-4708 or at <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/pe9807.htm>. For further information, contact Jo Vos or Roger Brooks at 612/296-4708.