



-- The co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee hope to introduce legislation next week to give auditors access to more information to further their review of the GAB.

That would include records such as complaints filed with the agency. State Auditor Joe Chrisman testified today he was granted access to 576 such complaints out of more than 1,000 filed during the three-year audit period. The limitation came because the audit bureau is not specifically named as an entity to which the records could be disclosed.

"In the scope of the bureau's 50 years, I can't speak for the early years," Chrisman said. "But having been at the bureau as long as I have, I at least can assure you this is very unusual."

The GAB sought advice from then-AG J.B. Van Hollen over what records could be given to the LAB under state statute and followed his recommendation in what was turned over.

Chrisman said that certain parts of the audit were not affected by the limited scope, though areas where conclusion could change if more information was turned over are specifically noted.

Dem members raised concerns during today's Audit Committee on the LAB report that it was an incomplete review.

"I know that we are going to proceed, but I do so with some deep concern about the integrity of our conclusions if we question the thoroughness and the integrity of the pages themselves," said state Sen. Janet Bewley, D-Ashland.

Republicans have seized on the audit to call for changes, including some who have suggested it is a rogue agency. GAB Director Kevin Kennedy pushed back on that suggestion today and called the agency a success story.

"This is a legislative initiative the public and the Legislature should be

proud of," Kennedy said. "The agency has been a steadfast, consistent presence in the midst of a politically turbulent time."

-- Kennedy said the agency at times has run into staffing and funding issues, but that drew a sharp response from Rep. John Nygren, co-chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

Nygren said that in the last two years he met with Kennedy only once, and that was in September to confer on the voter ID law.

"You're saying there was a staff problem, then why were we not aware of the staff problem?" Nygren asked. "To hear now that it's about staffing and commitments with the Legislature, it's kind of offensive to be honest, because you can't solve a problem if you don't know about it."

Kennedy replied that the request for staffing was in the governor's budget.

"I have people camped out in my office right now for this upcoming budget," Nygren said.

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