

# Top state inspector urges publicizing probe findings

## Official criticizes law shielding process of investigations

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Illinois' executive inspector general said Tuesday that his office should be able to make public the results of investigations into wrongdoing by state officials and employees.

Under the current law, much of the information discovered by investigators is kept secret, which makes it difficult for the public to gauge the effectiveness of the office.

"I fully understand how this lack of transparency obscures the work of this office and contributes to public skepticism over the integrity of our investigations," said Executive Inspector General James Wright in a statement Tuesday.

However, whether other state officials will get the idea remains to be seen. Wright has endorsed it for several months. On Tuesday, he threw his support behind a bill introduced by Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington) to make the final reports of substantiated complaints available publicly through the Freedom of Information Act. Names of the complainants would be removed to protect their identity.

Wright's comments came as his office released its annual report Tuesday. The report provides a breakdown of the nature of the almost 1,300 complaints filed, showing what type of allegations were made in each department. Complaints are classified into categories such as misconduct, personnel, false employment application, patronage, hiring improprieties and harassment.

But the tables of numbers still don't provide much insight into how wrongdoing is being policed in state government.

From July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, the office substantiated 64 complaints and determined 172 were unfounded, according to the report.

Thirteen state employees were discharged, resigned or are in the process of being discharged. But it cannot be determined from the report where the employees worked or

the type of wrongdoing involved.

The report says the office referred six cases to the U.S. attorney's office. But Deputy Inspector General Gilbert Jimenez said current state law prohibits the office from revealing which departments were involved.

Though the work of the inspector general's office is not released publicly, reports obtained by the Tribune have provided a glimpse into some of the concerns raised about state hiring practices under Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Confidential reports issued by Blagojevich's first inspector general, Zalwaynaka "Z" Scott, said the governor's patronage office played a key role in subverting state laws meant to give veterans preference for state jobs and to ban political considerations in hiring.

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