http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/walker-44thb-s5-2.jpg


***The yearly nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) review of state agencies, known as the Single Audit, was recently released and like a football game film it's a good place to evaluate performance. You might say, after watching the game film, experts gave Wisconsin a failing grade.***

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MADISON - When the game is over the coaches go into the film room to see where the breakdown was in play execution. The best game plan in the world is not any good if the team does not execute it.

The “game film” for the State of Wisconsin was recently released. This is a good place to start for anyone evaluating the state’s performance.

Every year the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) conducts a review of state agencies. Known as the Single Audit, auditors examine Wisconsin’s financial accounting of federal dollars.

State computer systems are a bit like the football team’s offensive line. These systems do the grunt work so the star players can score.

Computer systems must work well for everyone else in state government to do their job. Watching the film – or in this case reading the audit – I learned about computer problems so great that the details, according to the LAB, “were too sensitive to communicate publically.” In other words, by describing the problems, auditors would open the state up to more problems making it easier to “maliciously” expose personal data of employees and students’ information, and deliberately introducing financial misstatements or fraudulent payments.

Auditors found significant deficiencies in computer systems run by the Department of Administration (DOA) and systems run by the University of Wisconsin (UW).

With so many potential holes in the offensive line, it is no surprise our quarterback has been sacked an awful lot.

A key role of the state is oversight. The “watchdog” role is critical. Watching over health facilities, including nursing homes, and hospitals, is one job of the Department of Health Services (DHS). Audits found DHS officials identified problems at health facilities but failed to refer any of the two years’ worth of cases of caregiver misconduct to the Department of Justice for prosecution. When asked why, the department blamed staff turnover.

That’s like saying we forgot to tell the new blocker to block!

Auditors found the DHS did not have proper procedures in place to stop improper use of federal money in “Money Follows the Person”, a program to help people move from nursing homes to the community. Errors were so great, auditors “qualified” – in auditor language – their opinion of the program.

You might say, after watching game film, experts gave a failing grade.

At the Department of Administration, auditors reported many problems with the administration of two programs to provide housing and other local assistance. Auditors found improper payments; contracts not properly executed; a backlog of incomplete monitoring activities and required site visits not completed. Required performance and evaluation reports had not been done for at least two years.

These findings are disturbingly similar to those auditors found at Wisconsin’s Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). Ironically, the Governor moved one of these programs from WEDC to the Department of Administration at insistence from the feds because previously the state was not following federal requirements.

Watching the film – or reading the audit – I was struck by repeat bad performance.

Almost two-thirds of the auditors' recommendations were made in previous Single Audits.

If mistakes are not fixed, the team is never going to get better. Persistent problems lead to penalties – in football and state government.

For example, an estimated $62 million in federal funds since 2003 had to be sent back to the federal government because of improper actions taken by the Department of Administration.

The first goal of government is getting the job done right. Proper training, policies and procedures, oversight, competence, accuracy, and compliance all matter.

A few months ago, the Governor created a new Governor's Commission on Government Reform, Efficiency and Performance. Commission members would do well to start by watching the film.

If the front line does not perform, the quarterback is sacked, the running back loses yards, and the coach is fired.