Committee Oversight Authority

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Senate Rules

“It shall be the duty of” all committees “to maintain oversight over the application, execution and operation of the laws within its jurisdiction” (Senate Rules, Section 5).

General Laws

"**§ 22-6-2.1. Subpoena power.**

"The standing committees of the house of representatives as established by the rules of the house of representatives and the standing committees of the senate as established by the rules of the senate shall in the performance of their duties have the power upon majority vote of the committee members present and with the written approval of the speaker for committees of the house and with the written approval of the president of the senate for committees of the senate to issue witness subpoenas, subpoenas duces tecum, and orders for the production of books, accounts, papers, records, and documents which shall be signed and issued by the chairperson of the committee, or a person serving in his or her capacity, and shall be returnable to the chairperson. All subpoenas and orders shall be served as subpoenas in civil cases in the superior court are now served, and witnesses so subpoenaed shall be entitled to the same fees for attendance and travel as now provided for

witnesses in civil cases in the superior court. If the person subpoenaed to attend before the committee fails to obey the command of the subpoena without reasonable cause, or refuses to be sworn, or to be examined, or to answer a legal and pertinent question, or if any person shall refuse to produce books, accounts, papers, records, and documents material to the issue, set forth in an order duly served on that person, the committee by majority vote of the committee members present may apply to any justice of the superior court, for any county, upon proof by affidavit of the fact, for a rule or order returnable in not less than two (2) nor more than five (5) days, directing the person to show cause before the justice who made the order or any other justice described above why he or she should not be adjudged in contempt. Upon the return of the orders the justice before whom the matter is brought on for hearing shall examine under oath that person, and the person shall be given an opportunity to be heard, and if the justice shall determine that the person has refused without reasonable cause or legal excuse to be examined or to answer a legal and pertinent question, or to produce books, accounts, papers, records, and documents material to the issue which he or she was ordered to bring or produce, the justice may immediately commit the offender to the adult correctional institutions, there to remain until he or she submits to do the act which he or she was required to do, or is discharged according to law" (R.I. Gen. Laws § 22-6-2.1).

"**§ 22-6-13. Subpoena power.**

"The committee on finance of the house of representatives is authorized in the performance of its duties as provided in §§ 22-6-10 — 22-6-12 to require the attendance of any state employee by subpoena or otherwise and to require the production of books, papers, and documents which are necessary for its work" (R.I. Gen. Laws § 22-6-13).