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Our View: Lacking cash for ethics bill

The lack of enthusiasm for ethics reform in the 2007 Legislature has now manifested itself in dollars and cents, as it turns out lawmakers did not trouble to fund one of the few ethics bills they allowed to become law this year.

Someone dropped the ball. That's the innocent explanation.

State budget officials said that no one asked them for more money to pay for ethics training for elected officials and public employees.

Maybe the estimated \$500,000 for ethics training - mostly for new programming services, as it can be delivered on the Internet - is too small an appropriation for lawmakers and the Division of Administration to notice.

But it's silly for lawmakers or administration officials to argue that they didn't know that the training bill carried a price tag. We don't know how many newspaper subscriptions or Internet services there are in state government, but anyone following the ethics debate - and there was a lot of it - knew that there would be an additional cost for the ethics training bill.

As we noted, it's not a lot of money in the larger scheme of state government, and the training is phased in over a period of a couple of years. "We need to help them execute their legislative mandate," Commissioner of Administration Jerry Luke LeBlanc said. It can and should be done.

That it wasn't done, though, is testimony to the priority that ethics reform had in the State Capitol this year.