

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1320

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency and accountability of Federal advisory committees, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 5, 2009

Mr. CLAY (for himself and Mr. TOWNS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

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## A BILL

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency and accountability of Federal advisory committees, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the  
5 “Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments of 2009”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for  
7 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Ensuring independent advice and expertise.

Sec. 3. Preventing efforts to circumvent the Federal Advisory Committee Act and public disclosure.

Sec. 4. Increasing transparency of advisory committees.

Sec. 5. Comptroller General review and reports.

Sec. 6. Definitions.

Sec. 7. Effective date.

1 **SEC. 2. ENSURING INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND EXPERTISE.**

2 (a) BAR ON POLITICAL LITMUS TESTS.—Section 9  
3 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.)  
4 is amended—

5 (1) in the section heading by inserting “MEM-  
6 BERSHIP;” after “ADVISORY COMMITTEES;”;

7 (2) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as  
8 subsections (d) and (e), respectively; and

9 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-  
10 lowing:

11 “(b) APPOINTMENTS MADE WITHOUT REGARD TO  
12 POLITICAL AFFILIATION OR ACTIVITY.—All appointments  
13 to advisory committees shall be made without regard to  
14 political affiliation or political activity, unless required by  
15 Federal statute.”.

16 (b) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE.—Section  
17 9 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.)  
18 is further amended by inserting after subsection (b) (as  
19 added by subsection (a)) the following:

20 “(c) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE.—

21 “(1)(A) The head of each agency shall ensure  
22 that no individual appointed to serve on an advisory  
23 committee that reports to the agency has a conflict  
24 of interest that is relevant to the functions to be per-

1 formed by the advisory committee, unless the head  
2 of the agency determines that the need for the indi-  
3 vidual's services outweighs the potential impacts of  
4 the conflict of interest.

5 “(B) If the head of the agency makes such a  
6 determination with respect to an individual, nothing  
7 in this subsection is intended to preclude the head  
8 of the agency from requiring the recusal of the indi-  
9 vidual from particular aspects of the committee's  
10 work.

11 “(C) In the case of an individual appointed as  
12 a representative, the fact that an individual is asso-  
13 ciated with the entity whose views are being rep-  
14 resented by the individual shall not itself be consid-  
15 ered a conflict of interest by the agency.

16 “(2) The head of each agency shall require—

17 “(A) that each individual the agency ap-  
18 points or intends to appoint to serve on an ad-  
19 visory committee as a representative inform the  
20 agency official responsible for appointing the in-  
21 dividual in writing of any actual or potential  
22 conflict of interest—

23 “(i) that exists before appointment or  
24 that arises while the individual is serving  
25 on the Committee; and

1                   “(ii) that is relevant to the functions  
2                   to be performed; and

3                   “(B) that, for an individual appointed to  
4                   serve on an advisory committee, the conflict is  
5                   publicly disclosed as described in section 11.

6                   “(3) Nothing in this subsection is intended to  
7                   alter any requirement or obligation for a special  
8                   Government employee under the Ethics in Govern-  
9                   ment Act (5 U.S.C. App.) or other applicable ethics  
10                  law, including any requirement to file a financial dis-  
11                  closure report. The head of each agency shall require  
12                  that each individual the agency appoints as a special  
13                  Government employee inform the agency in writing  
14                  of any conflict that exists before appointment or  
15                  that arises while the individual is serving on the  
16                  committee to the extent any financial disclosure re-  
17                  quired by the Ethics in Government Act (5 U.S.C.  
18                  App.) or other applicable law would not uncover the  
19                  conflict of interest as such term is defined in regula-  
20                  tions promulgated by the Office of Government Eth-  
21                  ics to carry out this subsection.

22                  “(4) The head of each agency shall ensure that  
23                  each report of an advisory committee that reports to  
24                  the agency is the result of the advisory committee’s  
25                  judgment, independent from the agency. Each advi-

1 sory committee shall include in each report of the  
2 committee a statement describing the process used  
3 by the advisory committee in formulating the rec-  
4 ommendations or conclusions contained in the re-  
5 port.”.

6 (c) REGULATIONS.—

7 (1) REGULATIONS RELATING TO CONFLICTS OF  
8 INTEREST.—Not later than 180 days after the date  
9 of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Of-  
10 fice of Government Ethics, in consultation with the  
11 Administrator of General Services, shall promul-  
12 gate—

13 (A) regulations defining the term “conflict  
14 of interest”;

15 (B) regulations identifying the method by  
16 which individuals must disclose conflicts and  
17 the period of time for which a representative or  
18 special Government employee, or a candidate  
19 for appointment as a representative or special  
20 Government employee, shall look back in time  
21 to determine whether an interest is considered  
22 a conflict for the purpose of the notification re-  
23 quirement in subsection (c) of section 9 of the  
24 Federal Advisory Committee Act, as added by  
25 this section; and

1 (C) such other regulations as the Director  
2 finds necessary to carry out and ensure the en-  
3 forcement of such subsection (c).

4 (2) REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING FACAA.—Sec-  
5 tion 7(e) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
6 U.S.C. App.) is amended by inserting after “(c)” the  
7 following: “The Administrator shall promulgate reg-  
8 ulations as necessary to implement this Act.”.

9 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT THE FED-**  
10 **ERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT AND PUB-**  
11 **LIC DISCLOSURE.**

12 (a) DE FACTO MEMBERS.—Section 4 of the Federal  
13 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended by  
14 adding at the end the following:

15 “(d) TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AS MEMBER.—An  
16 individual who is not a full-time or permanent part-time  
17 officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be  
18 regarded as a member of a committee if the individual  
19 regularly attends and participates in committee meetings  
20 as if the individual were a member, even if the individual  
21 does not have the right to vote or veto the advice or rec-  
22 ommendations of the advisory committee.”.

23 (b) SUBCOMMITTEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-  
24 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended by  
25 striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

1       “(a) APPLICATION.—The provisions of this Act or of  
2 any rule, order, or regulation promulgated under this Act  
3 shall apply to each advisory committee, including any sub-  
4 committee or subgroup thereof, except to the extent that  
5 any Act of Congress establishing any such advisory com-  
6 mittee specifically provides otherwise. Any subcommittee  
7 or subgroup that reports to a parent committee estab-  
8 lished under section 9(a) is not required to comply with  
9 section 9(e). In this subsection, the term ‘subgroup’ in-  
10 cludes any working group, task force, or other entity  
11 formed for the purpose of assisting the committee or any  
12 subcommittee of the committee in its work.”.

13       (c) COMMITTEES CREATED UNDER CONTRACT.—  
14 Section 3(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
15 U.S.C. App.) is amended in the matter following subpara-  
16 graph (C) by adding at the end the following: “An advi-  
17 sory committee is considered to be established by an agen-  
18 cy, agencies, or the President, if it is formed, created, or  
19 organized under contract, other transactional authority,  
20 cooperative agreement, grant, or otherwise at the request  
21 or direction of, an agency, agencies, or the President.”.

22       (d) ADVISORY COMMITTEES CONTAINING SPECIAL  
23 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-  
24 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is further amended  
25 by adding at the end the following new subsection:

1       “(e) SPECIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Com-  
2 mittee members appointed as special government employ-  
3 ees shall not be considered full-time or part-time officers  
4 or employees of the Federal Government for purposes of  
5 determining the applicability of this Act under section  
6 3(2).”.

7 **SEC. 4. INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF ADVISORY COM-**  
8 **MITTEES.**

9       (a) INFORMATION REQUIREMENT.—Section 11 of the  
10 Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is  
11 amended—

12           (1) by striking the section designation and  
13 heading and inserting the following:

14 **“SEC. 11. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.”;**

15           (2) by redesignating subsection (a) as sub-  
16 section (d) and in that subsection—

17                   (A) by inserting the following subsection  
18 heading: “AVAILABILITY OF PAPER COPIES OF  
19 TRANSCRIPTS.—”; and

20                   (B) by inserting after “duplication,” the  
21 following: “paper”;

22           (3) by striking “(b)” and inserting “(e) AGEN-  
23 CY PROCEEDING DEFINED.—”; and

1           (4) by inserting before subsection (d), as redese-  
2           gnated by paragraph (2), the following new sub-  
3           sections:

4           “(a) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each advisory  
5           committee, the head of the agency to which the advisory  
6           committee reports shall make publicly available in accord-  
7           ance with subsection (b) the following information:

8                   “(1) The charter of the advisory committee.

9                   “(2) A description of the process used to estab-  
10           lish and appoint the members of the advisory com-  
11           mittee, including the following:

12                           “(A) The process for identifying prospec-  
13                   tive members.

14                           “(B) The process of selecting members for  
15                   balance of viewpoints or expertise.

16                           “(C) A justification of the need for rep-  
17                   resentative members, if any.

18                   “(3) A list of all current members, including,  
19           for each member, the following:

20                           “(A) The name of any person or entity  
21                   that nominated the member.

22                           “(B) The reason the member was ap-  
23                   pointed to the committee.

1           “(C) Whether the member is designated as  
2           a special government employee or a representa-  
3           tive.

4           “(D) In the case of a representative, the  
5           individuals or entity whose viewpoint the mem-  
6           ber represents.

7           “(E) Any conflict of interest relevant to  
8           the functions to be performed by the committee.

9           “(4) A list of all members designated as special  
10          government employees for whom written certifi-  
11          cations were made under section 208(b) of title 18,  
12          United States Code, a summary description of the  
13          conflict necessitating the certification, and the rea-  
14          son for granting the certification.

15          “(5) A summary of the process used by the ad-  
16          visory committee for making decisions.

17          “(6) Transcripts or audio or video recordings of  
18          all meetings of the committee.

19          “(7) Any written determination by the Presi-  
20          dent or the head of the agency to which the advisory  
21          committee reports, pursuant to section 10(d), to  
22          close a meeting or any portion of a meeting and the  
23          reasons for such determination.

24          “(8) Notices of future meetings of the com-  
25          mittee.

1           “(9) Any additional information considered rel-  
2           evant by the head of the agency to which the advi-  
3           sory committee reports.

4           “(b) MANNER OF DISCLOSURE.—

5           “(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the  
6           head of an agency shall make the information re-  
7           quired to be disclosed under this section available  
8           electronically on the official public internet site of  
9           the agency at least 15 calendar days before each  
10          meeting of an advisory committee. If the head of the  
11          agency determines that such timing is not prac-  
12          ticable for any required information, he shall make  
13          the information available as soon as practicable but  
14          no later than 48 hours before the next meeting of  
15          the committee. An agency may withhold from disclo-  
16          sure any information that would be exempt from dis-  
17          closure under section 552 of title 5, United States  
18          Code.

19          “(2) The head of an agency shall make avail-  
20          able electronically, on the official public internet site  
21          of the agency, a transcript or audio or video record-  
22          ing of each advisory committee meeting not later  
23          than 30 calendar days after the meeting.

24          “(c) PROVISION OF INFORMATION BY ADMINIS-  
25          TRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES.—The Administrator of

1 General Services shall provide, on the official public inter-  
2 net site of the General Services Administration, electronic  
3 access to the information made available by each agency  
4 under this section.”.

5 (b) CHARTER FILING.—Section 9(e) of the Federal  
6 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as redesignated  
7 by section 2, is amended—

8 (1) by striking “with (1) the Administrator,”  
9 and all that follows through “, or” and inserting  
10 “(1) with the Administrator and”;

11 (2) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-  
12 graph (I);

13 (3) by striking the period and inserting a semi-  
14 colon at the end of subparagraph (J); and

15 (4) by adding at the end the following new sub-  
16 paragraphs:

17 “(K) the authority under which the committee  
18 is established;

19 “(L) the estimated number of members and a  
20 description of the expertise needed to carry out the  
21 objectives of the committee;

22 “(M) a description of whether the committee  
23 will be composed of special government employees,  
24 representatives, or members from both categories;  
25 and

1           “(N) whether the committee has the authority  
2           to create subcommittees and if so, the agency official  
3           authorized to exercise such authority.”.

4 **SEC. 5. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEW AND REPORTS.**

5           (a) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United  
6 States shall review compliance by agencies with the Fed-  
7 eral Advisory Committee Act, as amended by this Act, in-  
8 cluding whether agencies are appropriately appointing ad-  
9 visory committee members as either special government  
10 employees or representatives.

11          (b) REPORT.—The Comptroller General shall submit  
12 to the committees described in subsection (c) two reports  
13 on the results of the review, as follows:

14           (1) The first report shall be submitted not later  
15 than one year after the date of promulgation of reg-  
16 ulations under section 2.

17           (2) The second report shall be submitted not  
18 later than five years after such date of promulgation  
19 of regulations.

20          (c) COMMITTEES.—The committees described in this  
21 subsection are the Committee on Oversight and Govern-  
22 ment Reform of the House of Representatives and the  
23 Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-  
24 fairs of the Senate.

1 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

2 Section 3 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
3 U.S.C. App.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
4 lowing new paragraphs:

5 “(5) The term ‘representative’ means an indi-  
6 vidual who is not a full-time or part-time employee  
7 of the Federal Government and who is appointed to  
8 an advisory committee to represent the views of an  
9 entity or entities outside the Federal Government.

10 “(6) The term ‘special Government employee’  
11 has the same meaning as in section 202(a) of title  
12 18, United States Code.”.

13 **SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

14 This Act shall take effect 30 days after the date of  
15 the enactment of this Act, except as otherwise provided  
16 in section 2(c)(1).

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