

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3124

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 6, 2011

Mr. CLAY (for himself, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. TOWNS, Mrs. MALONEY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. COOPER, Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. WELCH, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, and Ms. SPEIER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency 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 2011”.

1 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
2 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. Managing Federal advisory committees.
- Sec. 6. Comptroller General review and reports.
- Sec. 7. Application of Federal Advisory Committee Act to Trade Advisory Committees.
- Sec. 8. Definitions.
- Sec. 9. Technical and conforming amendments.
- Sec. 10. Effective date.

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

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

7 (1) in the section heading, by inserting “MEM-
8 BERSHIP;” after “ADVISORY COMMITTEES;”;

9 (2) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as
10 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

11 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
12 lowing:

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

18 (b) MINIMIZING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—Section
19 9 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.)

1 is further amended by inserting after subsection (b) (as
2 added by subsection (a)) the following:

3 “(c) PUBLIC NOMINATIONS OF COMMITTEE MEM-
4 BERS.—Prior to appointing members to an advisory com-
5 mittee, the head of an agency shall give interested persons
6 an opportunity to suggest potential committee members.
7 The agency shall include a request for comments in the
8 Federal Register notice required under subsection (a) and
9 provide a mechanism for interested persons to comment
10 through the official website of the agency. The agency
11 shall consider any comments submitted under this sub-
12 section in selecting the members of an advisory committee.

13 “(d) DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS.—

14 “(1) An individual appointed to an advisory
15 committee who is not a full-time or permanent part-
16 time officer or employee of the Federal Government
17 shall be designated as—

18 “(A) a special Government employee, if the
19 individual is providing advice based on the indi-
20 vidual’s expertise or experience; or

21 “(B) a representative, if the individual is
22 representing the views of an entity or entities
23 outside of the Federal Government.

1 “(2) An agency may not designate committee
2 members as representatives to avoid subjecting them
3 to Federal ethics rules and requirements.

4 “(3) The designated agency ethics official for
5 each agency shall review the members of each advisory
6 committee that reports to the agency to determine
7 whether each member’s designation is appropriate,
8 and to redesignate members if appropriate. The
9 designated agency ethics official shall certify to
10 the head of the agency that such review has been
11 made—

12 “(A) following the initial appointment of
13 members; and

14 “(B) at the time a committee’s charter is
15 renewed, or, in the case of a committee with an
16 indefinite charter, every 2 years.

17 “(4) The head of each agency shall inform each
18 individual appointed to an advisory committee that
19 reports to the agency whether the individual is appointed
20 as a special Government employee or as a representative.
21 The agency head shall provide each committee member
22 with an explanation of the differences between special
23 Government employees and representatives and a summary
24 of applicable ethics requirements. The agency head,
25 acting through the

1 designated agency ethics official, shall obtain signed
2 and dated written confirmation from each committee
3 member that the member received and reviewed the
4 information required by this paragraph.

5 “(5) The Director of the Office of Government
6 Ethics shall provide guidance to agencies on what to
7 include in the summary of ethics requirements re-
8 quired by paragraph (4).

9 “(6) The head of each agency shall, to the ex-
10 tent practicable, develop and implement strategies to
11 minimize the need for written determinations under
12 section 208(b)(3) of title 18, United States Code.
13 Strategies may include such efforts as improving
14 outreach efforts to potential committee members and
15 seeking public input on potential committee mem-
16 bers.”.

17 (c) REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING FACA.—Section
18 7(c) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.
19 App.) is amended by inserting “promulgate regulations
20 and” after “The Administrator shall”.

21 (d) ENSURING INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND REC-
22 OMMENDATIONS.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act
23 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

24 (1) in section 8—

1 (A) in the section heading, by inserting
2 “**INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND REC-**
3 **COMMENDATIONS;**” after “**RESPONSIBIL-**
4 **ITIES OF AGENCY HEADS;**”

5 (B) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
6 section (c); and

7 (C) by inserting after subsection (a) the
8 following:

9 “(b) The head of each agency shall ensure that advice
10 and recommendations of an advisory committee that re-
11 ports to the agency are the result of the advisory commit-
12 tee’s judgment, independent from the agency. Each advi-
13 sory committee shall include a statement describing the
14 process used by the advisory committee in formulating the
15 advice and recommendations when they are transmitted
16 to the agency.”; and

17 (2) in section 10—

18 (A) in the section heading, by inserting “;
19 **CHAIR**” after “**ATTENDANCE**”; and

20 (B) by inserting after subsection (f) the
21 following new subsection:

22 “(g) The Chair shall not be an employee of the agen-
23 cy to which the advisory committee reports, unless di-
24 rected to chair a meeting by the head of the agency.”.

1 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT THE FED-**
2 **ERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT AND PUB-**
3 **LIC DISCLOSURE.**

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

7 “(d) TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AS MEMBER.—An
8 individual who is not a full-time or permanent part-time
9 officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be
10 regarded as a member of a committee if the individual
11 regularly attends and participates in committee meetings
12 as if the individual were a member, even if the individual
13 does not have the right to vote or veto the advice or rec-
14 ommendations of the advisory committee.”.

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

18 “(a) APPLICATION.—The provisions of this Act or of
19 any rule, order, or regulation promulgated under this Act
20 shall apply to each advisory committee, including any sub-
21 committee or subgroup thereof, except to the extent that
22 any Act of Congress establishing any such advisory com-
23 mittee specifically provides otherwise. Any subcommittee
24 or subgroup that reports to a parent committee estab-
25 lished under section 9(a) is not required to comply with
26 section 9(f). In this subsection, the term ‘subgroup’ in-

1 cludes any working group, task force, or other entity
2 formed for the purpose of assisting the committee or any
3 subcommittee of the committee in its work.”.

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

13 (d) ADVISORY COMMITTEES CONTAINING SPECIAL
14 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-
15 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as amended by
16 subsections (a) and (b) of this section, is further amended
17 by adding at the end the following new subsection:

18 “(e) SPECIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Com-
19 mittee members appointed as special Government employ-
20 ees shall not be considered full-time or permanent part-
21 time officers or employees of the Federal Government for
22 purposes of determining the applicability of this Act under
23 section 3(2).”.

1 **SEC. 4. INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF ADVISORY COM-**
2 **MITTEES.**

3 (a) INFORMATION REQUIREMENT.—Section 11 of the
4 Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is
5 amended to read as follows:

6 **“SEC. 11. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.**

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

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

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

15 “(A) The process for identifying prospec-
16 tive members.

17 “(B) The process of selecting members for
18 balance of viewpoints or expertise.

19 “(C) The reason each member was ap-
20 pointed to the committee.

21 “(D) A justification of the need for rep-
22 resentative members, if any.

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

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

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

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

7 “(4) A list of all members designated as special
8 Government employees for whom written certifi-
9 cations were made under section 208(b) of title 18,
10 United States Code, a copy of each such certifi-
11 cation, a summary description of the conflict necessi-
12 tating the certification, and the reason for granting
13 the certification.

14 “(5) Any recusal agreement made by a member
15 or any recusal known to the agency that occurs dur-
16 ing the course of a meeting or other work of the
17 committee.

18 “(6) A summary of the process used by the ad-
19 visory committee for making decisions.

20 “(7) Detailed minutes of all meetings of the
21 committee and a description of committee efforts to
22 make meetings accessible to the public using online
23 technologies (such as video recordings) or other
24 techniques (such as audio recordings).

1 “(8) Any written determination by the Presi-
2 dent or the head of the agency to which the advisory
3 committee reports, pursuant to section 10(d), to
4 close a meeting or any portion of a meeting and the
5 reasons for such determination.

6 “(9) Notices of future meetings of the com-
7 mittee.

8 “(10) Any additional information considered
9 relevant by the head of the agency to which the advi-
10 sory committee reports.

11 “(b) MANNER OF DISCLOSURE.—

12 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
13 graph (2), the head of an agency shall make the in-
14 formation required to be disclosed under this section
15 available electronically on the official public website
16 of the agency and to the Administrator at least 15
17 calendar days before each meeting of an advisory
18 committee. If the head of the agency determines that
19 such timing is not practicable for any required infor-
20 mation, such head shall make the information avail-
21 able as soon as practicable but no later than 48
22 hours before the next meeting of the committee. An
23 agency may withhold from disclosure any informa-
24 tion that would be exempt from disclosure under sec-
25 tion 552 of title 5, United States Code.

1 “(2) WEBSITE AVAILABILITY.—The head of an
2 agency shall make available electronically, on the of-
3 ficial public website of the agency, detailed minutes
4 and, to the extent available, a transcript or audio or
5 video recording of each advisory committee meeting
6 not later than 30 calendar days after such meeting.

7 “(3) GRANT REVIEWS.—In the case of grant re-
8 views, disclosure of information required by sub-
9 section (a)(3) may be provided in the aggregate
10 rather than by individual grant.

11 “(c) PROVISION OF INFORMATION BY ADMINIS-
12 TRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES.—The Administrator of
13 General Services shall provide, on the official public
14 website of the General Services Administration, electronic
15 access to the information made available by each agency
16 under this section.

17 “(d) AVAILABILITY OF MEETING MATERIALS.—Ex-
18 cept where prohibited by contractual agreements entered
19 into prior to the effective date of this Act, agencies and
20 advisory committees shall make available to any person,
21 at actual cost of duplication, copies of advisory committee
22 meeting materials.”.

23 (b) CHARTER FILING.—Subsection (f) of section 9 of
24 the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as

1 redesignated by section 2(a), is amended to read as fol-
2 lows:

3 “(f) No advisory committee shall meet or take any
4 action until an advisory committee charter has been filed
5 with the Administrator, the head of the agency to whom
6 any advisory committee reports, and the standing commit-
7 tees of the Senate and of the House of Representatives
8 having legislative jurisdiction of such agency. Such charter
9 shall contain the following information in the following
10 order:

11 “(1) The committee’s official designation.

12 “(2) The authority under which the committee
13 is established.

14 “(3) The committee’s objectives and the scope
15 of its activity.

16 “(4) A description of the duties for which the
17 committee is responsible, and, if such duties are not
18 solely advisory, a specification of the authority for
19 such functions.

20 “(5) The agency or official to whom the com-
21 mittee reports.

22 “(6) The agency responsible for providing the
23 necessary support for the committee.

1 “(7) The responsibilities of the officer or em-
2 ployee of the Federal Government designated under
3 section 10(e).

4 “(8) The estimated number and frequency of
5 committee meetings.

6 “(9) The period of time necessary for the com-
7 mittee to carry out its purposes.

8 “(10) The committee’s termination date, if less
9 than two years from the date of the committee’s es-
10 tablishment.

11 “(11) The estimated number of members and a
12 description of the expertise needed to carry out the
13 objectives of the committee.

14 “(12) A description of whether the committee
15 will be composed of special Government employees,
16 representatives, or members from both categories.

17 “(13) Whether the agency intends to create
18 subcommittees and if so, the agency official author-
19 ized to exercise such authority.

20 “(14) The estimated annual operating costs in
21 dollars and full-time equivalent positions for such
22 committee.

23 “(15) The recordkeeping requirements of the
24 committee.

25 “(16) The date the charter is filed.

1 A copy of any such charter shall also be furnished to the
2 Library of Congress.”.

3 **SEC. 5. MANAGING FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES.**

4 (a) COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT OFFICERS.—Sub-
5 section (c) of section 8 of the Federal Advisory Committee
6 Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as redesignated by section 2(d), is
7 amended to read as follows:

8 “(c) The head of each agency that has an advisory
9 committee shall designate an Advisory Committee Man-
10 agement Officer who shall—

11 “(1) be a senior official who is—

12 “(A) an expert in implementing the re-
13 quirements of this Act and regulations promul-
14 gated pursuant to this Act; and

15 “(B) the primary point of contact for the
16 General Services Administration;

17 “(2) be responsible for the establishment, man-
18 agement, and supervision of the advisory committees
19 of the agency, including establishing procedures, per-
20 formance measures, and outcomes for such commit-
21 tees;

22 “(3) assemble and maintain the reports,
23 records, and other papers (including advisory com-
24 mittee meeting materials) of any such committee
25 during its existence;

1 “(4) ensure any such committee and cor-
2 responding agency staff adhere to the provisions of
3 this Act and any regulations promulgated pursuant
4 to this Act;

5 “(5) maintain records on each employee of any
6 such committee and completion of training required
7 for any such employee;

8 “(6) be responsible for providing the informa-
9 tion required in section 7(b) of this Act to the Ad-
10 ministrators; and

11 “(7) carry out, on behalf of that agency, the
12 provisions of section 552 of title 5, United States
13 Code, with respect to the reports, records, and other
14 papers described in paragraph (3).”.

15 **SEC. 6. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEW AND REPORTS.**

16 (a) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United
17 States shall review compliance by agencies with the Fed-
18 eral Advisory Committee Act, as amended by this Act, in-
19 cluding whether agencies are appropriately appointing ad-
20 visory committee members as either special Government
21 employees or representatives.

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

1 **SEC. 8. 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 paragraph:

5 “(5) The term ‘special Government employee’
6 has the same meaning as in section 202(a) of title
7 18, United States Code.”.

8 **SEC. 9. TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**

9 Section 7(d)(1) of the Federal Advisory Committee
10 Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

11 (1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “the rate
12 specified for GS–18 of the General Schedule under
13 section 5332” and inserting “the rate for level IV of
14 the Executive Schedule under section 5315”; and

15 (2) in subparagraph (C)(i), by striking “handi-
16 capped individuals (within the meaning of section
17 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.
18 794))” and inserting “individuals with disabilities
19 (as defined in section 7(20) of the Rehabilitation Act
20 of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 705(20))”.

21 **SEC. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

22 This Act shall take effect 30 days after the date of
23 the enactment of this Act.

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