

113TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1347

To provide transparency, accountability, and limitations of Government sponsored conferences.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 23, 2013

Mr. COBURN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. CHIESA, Mr. ENZI, and Ms. AYOTTE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

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## A BILL

To provide transparency, accountability, and limitations of Government sponsored conferences.

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.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Conference Account-  
5 ability Act of 2013”.

6 **SEC. 2. GOVERNMENT SPONSORED CONFERENCES.**

7 (a) TRAVEL EXPENSES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES RE-  
8 LATING TO CONFERENCES.—

9 (1) LIMITATIONS AND REPORTS ON TRAVEL EX-  
10 PENSES TO CONFERENCES.—Chapter 57 of title 5,

1 United States Code, is amended by adding at the  
2 end the following:

3 **“§ 5712. Limitations and reports on travel expenses to**  
4 **conferences**

5 “(a) In this section, the term—

6 “(1) ‘conference’ means a meeting that—

7 “(A) is held for consultation, education, or  
8 discussion;

9 “(B) is not held entirely at an agency facil-  
10 ity;

11 “(C) involves costs associated with travel  
12 and lodging for some participants; and

13 “(D) is sponsored by 1 or more agencies,  
14 1 or more organizations that are not agencies,  
15 or a combination of such agencies or organiza-  
16 tions; and

17 “(2) ‘international conference’ means a con-  
18 ference attended by representatives of—

19 “(A) the United States Government; and

20 “(B) any foreign government, international  
21 organization, or foreign nongovernmental orga-  
22 nization.

23 “(b) No agency may pay the travel expenses for more  
24 than 50 employees of that agency who are stationed in  
25 the United States, for any international conference occur-

1 ring outside the United States, unless the Secretary of  
2 State submits to Congress before the conference a written  
3 certification that attendance for such employees is in the  
4 national interest.

5 “(c) Not later than 30 days after the end of each  
6 quarter of each fiscal year, each agency shall post on the  
7 public Internet website of that agency a report on each  
8 conference for which the agency paid travel expenses dur-  
9 ing the preceding 3 months that includes—

10 “(1) the itemized expenses paid by the agency,  
11 including travel expenses, the cost of scouting for  
12 and selecting the location of the conference, and any  
13 agency expenditures to otherwise support the con-  
14 ference;

15 “(2) the primary sponsor of the conference;

16 “(3) the location of the conference;

17 “(4) in the case of a conference for which that  
18 agency was the primary sponsor, a statement that—

19 “(A) justifies the location selected;

20 “(B) demonstrates the cost efficiency of  
21 the location; and

22 “(C) provides a cost benefit analysis of  
23 holding a conference rather than conducting a  
24 teleconference;

25 “(5) the date of the conference;

1           “(6) an explanation how the conference ad-  
2 vanced the mission of the agency;

3           “(7) the title and pay grade of any Federal em-  
4 ployee or any individual who is not a Federal em-  
5 ployee whose travel expenses or other conference ex-  
6 penses were paid by the agency; and

7           “(8) the total number of individuals whose trav-  
8 el expenses or other conference expenses were paid  
9 by the agency.

10          “(d) Each report posted on the public Internet  
11 website under subsection (c) shall—

12           “(1) be in a searchable electronic format; and

13           “(2) remain on that website for at least 5 years  
14 after the date of posting.”.

15          (2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMEND-  
16 MENT.—The table of sections for chapter 57 of title  
17 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after  
18 the item relating to section 5711 the following:

“5712. Limitations and reports on travel expenses to conferences.”.

19          (b) LIMITATIONS ON ANNUAL TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

20           (1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of each of fiscal  
21 years 2014 through 2018, an agency (as defined  
22 under section 5701(1) of title 5, United States  
23 Code) may not make, or obligate to make, expendi-  
24 tures for travel expenses, in an aggregate amount

1 greater than 80 percent of the aggregate amount of  
2 such expenses for fiscal year 2010.

3 (2) IDENTIFICATION OF TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

4 Not later than September 1, 2013, and after con-  
5 sultation with the Administrator of General Services  
6 and the Director of the Administrative Office of the  
7 United States Courts, the Director of the Office of  
8 Management and Budget shall establish guidelines  
9 for the determination of what expenses constitute  
10 travel expenses for purposes of this subsection. The  
11 guidelines shall identify specific expenses, and class-  
12 es of expenses, that are to be treated as travel ex-  
13 penses.

14 (c) CONFERENCE TRANSPARENCY AND LIMITA-  
15 TIONS.—

16 (1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection—

17 (A) the term “agency” has the meaning  
18 given under section 5701(1) of title 5, United  
19 States Code; and

20 (B) the term “conference” has the mean-  
21 ing given under section 5712(a)(1) of title 5,  
22 United States Code (as added by subsection  
23 (a)).

24 (2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF CONFERENCE MA-  
25 TERIALS.—Each agency shall post on the public

1 Internet website of that agency detailed information  
2 on any presentation made by any employee of that  
3 agency at a conference, including—

4 (A) any minutes relating to the presen-  
5 tation;

6 (B) any speech delivered;

7 (C) any visual exhibit, including photo-  
8 graphs or slides;

9 (D) any video, digital, or audio recordings  
10 of the conference; and

11 (E) information regarding any financial  
12 support or other assistance from a foundation  
13 or other non-Federal source used to pay or de-  
14 fray the costs of the conference, which shall in-  
15 clude a certification by the head of the agency  
16 that there is no conflict of interest resulting  
17 from the support received from each such  
18 source.

19 (3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT EXPENDED ON A  
20 CONFERENCE.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—No agency may expend  
22 more than \$500,000 to support a single con-  
23 ference.

24 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in  
25 this paragraph shall be construed to preclude

1 an agency from receiving financial support or  
2 other assistance from a foundation or other  
3 non-Federal source to pay or defray the costs of  
4 a conference the total cost of which exceeds  
5 \$500,000.

6 (4) LIMITATION ON THE ANNUAL NUMBER OF  
7 CONFERENCES AN AGENCY MAY SUPPORT.—

8 (A) IN GENERAL.—An agency may expend  
9 funds on not more than 1 conference that is  
10 sponsored or organized by a particular organi-  
11 zation during any fiscal year, unless the agency  
12 is the primary sponsor and organizer of the  
13 conference.

14 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in  
15 this paragraph shall be construed to preclude  
16 an agency from paying travel expenses for an  
17 employee of that agency to attend a conference.

18 (5) LIMITATION ON CONFERENCE POLICIES.—  
19 An agency may not establish or implement a policy  
20 that discourages or prohibits the selection of a loca-  
21 tion for travel, an event, a meeting, or a conference  
22 because the location is perceived to be a resort or va-  
23 cation destination.

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