

Calendar No. 869

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION**S. 2291****[Report No. 110–412]**

To enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style of Government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 1, 2007

Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. CARPER, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. OBAMA, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. TESTER, Mr. VOINOVICH, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. COCHRAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

JULY 10 (legislative day, JULY 9), 2008

Reported by Mr. LIEBERMAN, without amendment

A BILL

To enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style of Government documents issued to the public, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Plain Language in
3 Government Communications Act of 2007”.

4 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

5 The purpose of this Act is to improve the effective-
6 ness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public
7 by promoting clear Government communication that the
8 public can understand and use.

9 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

10 In this Act:

11 (1) **AGENCY.**—The term “agency” means an
12 Executive agency, as defined under section 105 of
13 title 5, United States Code.

14 (2) **COVERED DOCUMENT.**—The term “covered
15 document”—

16 (A) means any document (other than a
17 regulation) issued by an agency to the public
18 that—

19 (i) provides information about any
20 Federal Government requirement or pro-
21 gram; or

22 (ii) is relevant to obtaining any Fed-
23 eral Government benefit or service; and

24 (B) includes a letter, publication, form, no-
25 tice, or instruction.

1 (3) PLAIN LANGUAGE.—The term “plain lan-
2 guage” means language that the intended audience
3 can readily understand and use because that lan-
4 guage is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows
5 other best practices of plain language writing.

6 **SEC. 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES.**

7 (a) REQUIREMENT TO USE PLAIN LANGUAGE IN
8 NEW DOCUMENTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date
9 of enactment of this Act, each agency shall use plain lan-
10 guage in any covered document of the agency issued or
11 substantially revised after the date of enactment of this
12 Act.

13 (b) GUIDANCE.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—

15 (A) DEVELOPMENT.—Not later than 6
16 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
17 the Office of Management and Budget shall de-
18 velop guidance on implementing the require-
19 ments of subsection (a).

20 (B) ISSUANCE.—The Office of Manage-
21 ment and Budget shall issue the guidance de-
22 veloped under subparagraph (A) to agencies as a
23 circular.

1 (2) INTERIM GUIDANCE.—Before the issuance
2 of guidance under paragraph (1), agencies may fol-
3 low the guidance of—

4 (A) the Plain English Handbook published
5 by the Securities and Exchange Commission;

6 (B) the plain language guidelines devel-
7 oped by the Plain Language Action and Infor-
8 mation Network; or

9 (C) guidance provided by the head of the
10 agency that is consistent with the guidelines re-
11 ferred to under subparagraph (B).

12 **SEC. 5. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.**

13 (a) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after
14 the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each agency
15 shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and
16 Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee
17 on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of
18 Representatives a report that describes how the agency in-
19 tends to meet the following objectives:

20 (1) Communicating the requirements of this
21 Act to agency employees.

22 (2) Training agency employees to write in plain
23 language.

24 (3) Meeting the requirement under section 4(a).

1 (4) Ensuring ongoing compliance with the re-
2 quirements of this Act.

3 (5) Designating a senior official to be respon-
4 sible for implementing the requirements of this Act.

5 (b) ANNUAL AND OTHER REPORTS.—

6 (1) AGENCY REPORTS.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—The head of each agen-
8 cy shall submit reports on compliance with this
9 Act to the Office of Management and Budget.

10 (B) SUBMISSION DATES.—The Office of
11 Management and Budget shall notify each
12 agency of the date each report under subpara-
13 graph (A) is required for submission to enable
14 the Office of Management and Budget to meet
15 the requirements of paragraph (2).

16 (2) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Office of
17 Management and Budget shall review agency reports
18 submitted under paragraph (1) using the guidance
19 issued under section 4(b)(1)(B) and submit a report
20 on the progress of agencies to the Committee on
21 Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the
22 Senate and the Committee on Oversight and Govern-
23 ment Reform of Representatives—

24 (A) annually for the first 2 years after the
25 date of enactment of this Act; and

1 (B) once every 3 years thereafter.

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