

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5885

To require the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate to establish a process by which registered voters may sign national discharge petitions with respect to bills and joint resolutions introduced in or referred to the House and Senate, to require the House or Senate to hold a vote on the passage of any bill or joint resolution if a certain number of registered voters sign the national discharge petition for the bill or joint resolution, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 14, 2016

Mr. RUIZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration, and in addition to the Committee on Rules, 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 require the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate to establish a process by which registered voters may sign national discharge petitions with respect to bills and joint resolutions introduced in or referred to the House and Senate, to require the House or Senate to hold a vote on the passage of any bill or joint resolution if a certain number of registered voters sign the national discharge petition for the bill or joint resolution, 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; FINDINGS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Right to Petition Congress Act”.

6 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (1) The First Amendment of the Constitution
8 of the United States establishes the right of the peo-
9 ple to “petition the Government” for redress.

10 (2) Technology has dramatically expanded the
11 mechanisms through which the people can effectively
12 petition the Government.

13 (3) Congressional leadership and individual
14 Members of Congress have repeatedly blocked votes
15 in the House of Representatives and Senate on mat-
16 ters on which a majority of the American people
17 have publicly expressed the desire for redress.

18 (4) The refusal to allow votes in the House and
19 Senate prevents congressional deliberation on mat-
20 ters reflecting the will of the people, and in some in-
21 stances, a majority of Congress.

22 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL DISCHARGE PETITIONS.**

23 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCESS.—Not later than
24 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
25 Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary

1 of the Senate shall establish a process under which the
2 Clerk and the Secretary—

3 (1) shall develop a national discharge petition
4 for a bill or joint resolution which has been intro-
5 duced in the House or Senate (as the case may be)
6 during a Congress or which has been referred to the
7 House or Senate (as the case may be) after passage
8 by the other House during a Congress;

9 (2) shall make each such national discharge pe-
10 tition available for signature by qualified individuals;
11 and

12 (3) shall compile the signatures provided for
13 each such national discharge petition.

14 (b) REQUIRING REQUEST OF SPONSOR FOR AVAIL-
15 ABILITY OF PETITION FOR INTRODUCED LEGISLATION.—

16 In the case of a bill or joint resolution introduced in the
17 House or Senate, the Clerk or the Secretary (as the case
18 may be) may develop a national discharge petition under
19 this section only at the request of the sponsor of the bill
20 or joint resolution.

21 (c) METHODS.—The Clerk and the Secretary may
22 carry out this section using such methods as the Clerk
23 and Secretary consider appropriate, including providing
24 for the availability of national discharge petitions and the

1 acceptance of signatures on such petitions exclusively
2 through electronic means.

3 **SEC. 3. CONSIDERATION OF BILL OR JOINT RESOLUTION**
4 **IN THE HOUSE OR SENATE.**

5 (a) VOTE IN THE HOUSE OR SENATE.—If the Speak-
6 er of the House of Representatives or the Majority Leader
7 of the Senate receives a certification under subsection (b)
8 from the Clerk of the House of Representatives or the Sec-
9 retary of the Senate (as the case may be) that a national
10 discharge petition with respect to a bill or joint resolution
11 during a Congress has met the threshold for consideration
12 of the bill or joint resolution, the Speaker or Majority
13 Leader shall ensure that the House or Senate holds a vote
14 on final passage of such bill or joint resolution not later
15 than the earlier of—

16 (1) the expiration of the 15-day period (exclud-
17 ing Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays,
18 and any day on which neither House is in session
19 because of an adjournment sine die, a recess of more
20 than 3 days, or an adjournment of more than 3
21 days) beginning on the date the Speaker or Minority
22 Leader receives the certification; or

23 (2) the last day of the Congress.

24 (b) THRESHOLD FOR CERTIFICATION.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Clerk or the Secretary
2 (as the case may be) shall provide the Speaker of
3 the House or the Majority Leader of the Senate with
4 a certification that a national discharge petition with
5 respect to a bill or joint resolution has met the
6 threshold for consideration of the bill or joint resolu-
7 tion if the Clerk or the Secretary determines that
8 the number of valid signatures on the petition is
9 equal to or greater than 25 percent of all qualified
10 individuals (based on the most recent information
11 available from the chief State election official of each
12 State).

13 (2) VALIDITY OF SIGNATURES.—An individual’s
14 signature shall be considered valid for purposes of a
15 national discharge petition only if the individual pro-
16 vides with the signature—

17 (A) an attestation, made under penalty of
18 perjury, that the individual is a qualified indi-
19 vidual; and

20 (B) the name of the State in which the in-
21 dividual is registered to vote in elections for
22 Federal office.

23 **SEC. 4. INFORMATION ON VOTER REGISTRATION.**

24 As part of the process established for national dis-
25 charge petitions under this Act, the Clerk shall provide

1 on the official public website of the Office of the Clerk,
2 and the Secretary shall provide on the official public
3 website of the Office of the Secretary, a hyperlink through
4 which an individual may obtain information on how to reg-
5 ister to vote in elections for Federal office in the State
6 in which the individual resides.

7 **SEC. 5. COORDINATION WITH STATE ELECTION OFFICIALS.**

8 The chief State election official of each State shall
9 enter into such agreements with the Clerk and the Sec-
10 retary as may be required to enable the Clerk and Sec-
11 retary to carry out this Act.

12 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

13 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
14 this Act such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year
15 2016 and each succeeding fiscal year.

16 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

17 In this Act, the following definitions apply:

18 (1) The term “chief State election official”
19 means, with respect to a State, the individual des-
20 ignated by the State under section 10 of the Na-
21 tional Voter Registration Act of 1993 (52 U.S.C.
22 20509) to be responsible for the coordination of the
23 State’s responsibilities under such Act.

24 (2) The term “Clerk” means the Clerk of the
25 House of Representatives.

1 (3) The term “qualified individual” means an
2 individual who, at the time of providing a signature
3 on a national discharge petition, is registered to vote
4 in elections for Federal office held in the State in
5 which the individual resides.

6 (4) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
7 of the Senate.

8 (5) The term “State” means each of the several
9 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth
10 of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Com-
11 monwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and
12 the United States Virgin Islands.

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