

Oversight, vacancies of permanent inspectors general is not a new problem or one that is unique to this administration. This issue has persisted for years under both Democratic and Republican leadership. The Department of the Interior, for example, has lacked a Senate-confirmed inspector general for over a decade.

But it is not just vacancies that have been problematic. In a committee report, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs noted that “another type of personnel action has the potential for doing significant damage to OIG independence if abused: placing an IG on indefinite paid or unpaid nonduty status.”

My bill will address both of these problems.

First, H.R. 1847 requires notification of Congress in advance of an inspector general being placed on administrative leave. This ensures Congress is aware of any potential attempts to improperly sideline an inspector general.

Second, the bill requires the President to report to Congress if an inspector general has not been nominated within 210 days after a vacancy occurs for the position, including the reasons a nomination has not been made and a target date for doing so.

This reasserts Congress’ oversight role and allows Members to question, on an informal basis, the decision of any future administration to leave core offices vacant.

As Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY told The Washington Post in 2017, “Independent, nonpartisan IGs can be some of the President’s best allies in finding and cutting waste, fraud, and abuse in the bureaucracy.”

I agree with that statement. That is why I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, as well as the U.S. Senate, toward getting this commonsense bill signed into law.

I am grateful to my colleague from Georgia (Mr. HICE) for partnering with me on this legislation and to Chairman CUMMINGS and Ranking Member JORDAN for recognizing the importance of strengthening our Nation’s inspectors general.

I am also proud that this bill has received the endorsement of good-government groups across the ideological spectrum, including Project on Government Oversight, R Street Institute, American Oversight, Campaign for Accountability, Common Cause, and Public Citizen.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting good governance by voting “yes.”

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr.

ROUDA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1847, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ACCESS TO CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED REPORTS ACT

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 736) to require the Director of the Government Publishing Office to establish and maintain an online portal accessible to the public that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of all congressionally mandated reports in one place, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 736

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED REPORT.—The term “congressionally mandated report”—

(A) means a report that is required by statute to be submitted to either House of Congress or any committee of Congress or subcommittee thereof; and

(B) does not include a report required under part B of subtitle II of title 36, United States Code.

(2) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means the Director of the Government Publishing Office.

(3) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term “Federal agency” has the meaning given that term under section 102 of title 40, United States Code, but does not include the Government Accountability Office.

(4) OPEN FORMAT.—The term “open format” means a file format for storing digital data based on an underlying open standard that—

(A) is not encumbered by any restrictions that would impede reuse; and

(B) is based on an underlying open data standard that is maintained by a standards organization.

(5) REPORTS ONLINE PORTAL.—The term “reports online portal” means the online portal established under section (3)(a).

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF ONLINE PORTAL FOR CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED REPORTS.

(a) REQUIREMENT TO ESTABLISH ONLINE PORTAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall establish and maintain an online portal accessible by the public that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of all congressionally mandated reports in one place. The Director may publish other reports on the online portal.

(2) EXISTING FUNCTIONALITY.—To the extent possible, the Director shall meet the requirements under paragraph (1) by using existing online portals and functionality under the authority of the Director.

(3) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this Act, the Director shall consult with the

Clerk of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Librarian of Congress regarding the requirements for and maintenance of congressionally mandated reports on the reports online portal.

(b) CONTENT AND FUNCTION.—The Director shall ensure that the reports online portal includes the following:

(1) Subject to subsection (c), with respect to each congressionally mandated report, each of the following:

(A) A citation to the statute requiring the report.

(B) An electronic copy of the report, including any transmittal letter associated with the report, in an open format that is platform independent and that is available to the public without restrictions, including restrictions that would impede the re-use of the information in the report.

(C) The ability to retrieve a report, to the extent practicable, through searches based on each, and any combination, of the following:

(i) The title of the report.

(ii) The reporting Federal agency.

(iii) The date of publication.

(iv) Each congressional committee or subcommittee receiving the report, if applicable.

(v) The statute requiring the report.

(vi) Subject tags.

(vii) A unique alphanumeric identifier for the report that is consistent across report editions.

(viii) The serial number, Superintendent of Documents number, or other identification number for the report, if applicable.

(ix) Key words.

(x) Full text search.

(xi) Any other relevant information specified by the Director.

(D) The date on which the report was required to be submitted, and on which the report was submitted, to the reports online portal.

(E) To the extent practicable, a permanent means of accessing the report electronically.

(2) A means for bulk download of all congressionally mandated reports.

(3) A means for downloading individual reports as the result of a search.

(4) An electronic means for the head of each Federal agency to submit to the reports online portal each congressionally mandated report of the agency, as required by section 4.

(5) In tabular form, a list of all congressionally mandated reports that can be searched, sorted, and downloaded by—

(A) reports submitted within the required time;

(B) reports submitted after the date on which such reports were required to be submitted; and

(C) reports not submitted.

(c) NONCOMPLIANCE BY FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

(1) REPORTS NOT SUBMITTED.—If a Federal agency does not submit a congressionally mandated report to the Director, the Director shall to the extent practicable—

(A) include on the reports online portal—

(i) the information required under clauses (i), (ii), (iv), and (v) of subsection (b)(1)(C); and

(ii) the date on which the report was required to be submitted; and

(B) include the congressionally mandated report on the list described in subsection (b)(5)(C).

(2) REPORTS NOT IN OPEN FORMAT.—If a Federal agency submits a congressionally mandated report that is not in an open format, the Director shall include the congressionally mandated report in another format on the reports online portal.

(d) DEADLINE.—The Director shall ensure that information required to be published on the online portal under this Act with respect to a congressionally mandated report or information required under subsection (c) is published—

(1) not later than 30 calendar days after the information is received from the Federal agency involved; or

(2) in the case of information required under subsection (c), not later than 30 calendar days after the deadline under this Act for the Federal agency involved to submit information with respect to the congressionally mandated report involved.

(e) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN REPORTS.—

(1) EXCEPTION DESCRIBED.—A congressionally mandated report which is required by statute to be submitted to a committee of Congress or a subcommittee thereof, including any transmittal letter associated with the report, shall not be submitted to or published on the reports online portal if the chair of a committee or subcommittee to which the report is submitted notifies the Director in writing that the report is to be withheld from submission and publication under this Act.

(2) NOTICE ON PORTAL.—If a report is withheld from submission to or publication on the reports online portal under paragraph (1), the Director shall post on the portal—

(A) a statement that the report is withheld at the request of a committee or subcommittee involved; and

(B) the written notification specified in paragraph (1).

(f) FREE ACCESS.—The Director may not charge a fee, require registration, or impose any other limitation in exchange for access to the reports online portal.

(g) UPGRADE CAPABILITY.—The reports online portal shall be enhanced and updated as necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 4. FEDERAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES.

(a) SUBMISSION OF ELECTRONIC COPIES OF REPORTS.—Not earlier than 30 calendar days or later than 45 calendar days after the date on which a congressionally mandated report is submitted to either House of Congress or to any committee of Congress or subcommittee thereof, the head of the Federal agency submitting the congressionally mandated report shall submit to the Director the information required under subparagraphs (A) through (D) of section 3(b)(1) with respect to the congressionally mandated report. Nothing in this Act shall relieve a Federal agency of any other requirement to publish the congressionally mandated report on the online portal of the Federal agency or otherwise submit the congressionally mandated report to Congress or specific committees of Congress, or subcommittees thereof.

(b) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 240 calendar days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Director, shall issue guidance to agencies on the implementation of this Act.

(c) STRUCTURE OF SUBMITTED REPORT DATA.—The head of each Federal agency shall ensure that each congressionally mandated report submitted to the Director complies with the open format criteria established by the Director in the guidance issued under subsection (b).

(d) POINT OF CONTACT.—The head of each Federal agency shall designate a point of contact for congressionally mandated reports.

SEC. 5. CHANGING OR REMOVING REPORTS.

(a) LIMITATION ON AUTHORITY TO CHANGE OR REMOVE REPORTS.—Except as provided in subsection (b), the head of the Federal agency concerned may change or remove a con-

gressionally mandated report submitted to be published on the reports online portal only if—

(1) the head of the Federal agency consults with each committee of Congress or subcommittee thereof to which the report is required to be submitted (or, in the case of a report which is not required to be submitted to a particular committee of Congress or subcommittee thereof, to each committee with jurisdiction over the agency, as determined by the head of the agency in consultation with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate) prior to changing or removing the report; and

(2) a joint resolution is enacted to authorize the change in or removal of the report.

(b) EXCEPTIONS.—Notwithstanding subsection (a), the head of the Federal agency concerned—

(1) may make technical changes to a report submitted to or published on the online portal; and

(2) may remove a report from the online portal if the report was submitted to or published on the online portal in error.

SEC. 6. RELATIONSHIP TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

(1) require the disclosure of information, records, or reports that are exempt from public disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code; or

(2) impose any affirmative duty on the Director to review congressionally mandated reports submitted for publication to the reports online portal for the purpose of identifying and redacting such information or records.

(b) REDACTION OF INFORMATION.—The head of a Federal agency may redact information required to be disclosed under this Act if the information would be properly withheld from disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, and shall—

(1) redact information required to be disclosed under this Act if disclosure of such information is prohibited by law;

(2) redact information being withheld under this subsection prior to submitting the information to the Director;

(3) redact only such information properly withheld under this subsection from the submission of information or from any congressionally mandated report submitted under this Act;

(4) identify where any such redaction is made in the submission or report; and

(5) identify the exemption under which each such redaction is made.

SEC. 7. IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—This Act shall apply with respect to any congressionally mandated report which—

(A) is required by statute to be submitted to the House of Representatives or Senate at any time before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(B) is included by the Clerk of the House of Representatives or the Secretary of the Senate (as the case may be) on the list of reports received by the House of Representatives or Senate (as the case may be) at any time before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) TRANSITION RULE FOR PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED REPORTS.—The Director shall ensure that any congressionally mandated report described in paragraph (1) which was required to be submitted to Congress by a statute enacted before the date of the enactment of this Act is published on the online portal under this Act not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) REPORTS SUBMITTED TO COMMITTEES.—In the case of congressionally mandated re-

ports which are required by statute to be submitted to a committee of Congress or a subcommittee thereof, this Act shall apply with respect to—

(1) any such report which is first required to be submitted by a statute which is enacted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) to the maximum extent practical, any congressionally mandated report which was required to be submitted by a statute enacted before the date of enactment of this act unless—

(A) the chair of the committee, or subcommittee thereof, to which the report was required to be submitted notifies the Director in writing that the report is to be withheld from publication; and

(B) the Director publishes the notification on the online portal.

SEC. 8. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROUDA) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the measure before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I thank Representative MIKE QUIGLEY for his persistence in pursuing this good-government legislation. Hopefully, we can get this bill enacted this Congress.

H.R. 736, the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act, is a non-controversial bill that has been approved by the Oversight and Reform Committee many times. The bill is a commonsense measure that would make the government more transparent and accountable. It would create a one-stop-shop where Congress and members of the public could access agency reports to Congress.

Federal agencies submit thousands of reports to Congress each year. This bill will improve congressional oversight by making it easy to find and access these reports. H.R. 736 would also give the public access to agency reports.

Currently, members of the public often have to file requests under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain some agency reports to Congress. Many of these reports are not available online.

An online library of Federal reports would improve the ability of our staffs

to use the information in them to make sound policy. It also would encourage agency compliance with reporting requirements. Finally, it would support timely access to the reports by State and local governments, students, academics, and others, with the additional benefit of decreasing the burden on agencies to process FOIA requests.

The Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act has been endorsed by over 25 organizations from across the political spectrum. I have a letter from those groups that I include in the RECORD.

JULY 16, 2019.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI, REPUBLICAN LEADER McCARTHY, AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: We, the 27 undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for the bipartisan Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act ("ACMRA") and to respectfully urge you to vote in favor of the legislation on the House floor. If enacted, the ACMRA will strengthen Congressional oversight and improve government transparency.

The ACMRA will establish a central repository of agency reports submitted to Congress and will track whether agencies have submitted required reports. This will improve Members of Congress's access to the reports and ensure Congress knows when they become available.

The ACMRA also directs agencies to provide the Government Publishing Office (GPO) any report that is both required by law to be submitted to Congress and is releasable under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), subject to certain limitations. The legislation will not change what information is in the public sphere, but it will improve accessibility. Nor does the legislation affect in any way what information is provided to Congressional committees or place any burden upon them.

Under the ACMRA, agency reports will become publicly available on GPO's website within 30 days of submission to Congress, and will be redacted in accordance with FOIA's provisions, which include the removal of classified or otherwise confidential material. Reports will be assigned a unique identifier that will make it easy to track reports as new editions are released.

Additionally, the Congressional Research Service will supplement work already performed by the Clerk of the House to identify all agency reports the law requires be submitted to Congress. This will tell us whether an agency has complied with its obligation to submit reports in a timely fashion.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee favorably reported a similar version of the bill in April. Additionally, the legislation was repeatedly favorably reported by both the Committee on House Administration and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform during prior Congresses.

The ACMRA was first introduced in 2010, and we are hopeful it will become part of this Congress's transparency legacy.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the measure and are hopeful the ACMRA will be enacted shortly.

Sincerely yours,

American Association of Law Libraries, American Library Association, Americans for Prosperity, Campaign for Accountability, Center for Data Innovation, Center for Responsive Politics, Demand Progress, Data Coalition, Essential Information, Free Government Information, Freedom Works, Government Information Watch, GovTrack.us, Judicial Watch.

Liberty Coalition, Lincoln Network, National Coalition for History, National Immigrant Justice Center, National Security Archive, PEGI Project, Project On Government Oversight, R Street Institute, Senior Executives Association, Society of Professional Journalists, Sunlight Foundation, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Win Without War.

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, legislation similar to this bill has been introduced in the Senate and favorably reported by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 736, the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act sponsored by my colleague from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY).

Federal agencies are required to produce numerous reports to Congress each year. The reports cover a wide range of topics that give valuable insight into government activities.

While some reports are posted on agency websites, most are not available online. It is incredibly difficult for the general public to find reports, especially older reports. Keep in mind that these are reports that the taxpayers paid for in the first place.

H.R. 736 will solve this problem. The bill directs the Federal Government to compile all congressionally mandated reports in a central location.

The Government Publishing Office would be required to establish an online database where agencies would submit congressionally mandated reports. In order to protect sensitive information, the bill allows agencies to redact information in reports that would otherwise not be releasable to the public under the Freedom of Information Act.

The database would provide access to reports free of charge. The reports would be searchable, sortable, and available to be downloaded in bulk.

H.R. 736 ensures that these taxpayer-funded reports are transparent and accessible. It will make it easier for both the public and Congress to review and evaluate Federal agency activities. Increased transparency under this bill will allow the public to help Congress hold the government accountable.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY), a distinguished Member and sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I will keep my comments brief because this bipartisan, commonsense bill is simple.

H.R. 736 would make all agency reports to Congress, and releasable under FOIA, available on one website at no cost to the American public.

Each year, Federal agencies submit thousands of reports to Congress that contain a wealth of information that enables the public to better understand how Federal agencies are, or are not, fulfilling their respective missions, from ensuring the safety of our drugs and food supply to protecting the environment and monitoring the soundness of our financial institutions.

Unfortunately, many, if not most, of these reports simply sit collecting dust in the committees they are delivered to or are posted in numerous and confusing places on dozens of agency websites, rarely to be seen or thought of again.

In fact, the only comprehensive list of congressionally mandated reports is printed in paper format each year by the Clerk of the House and is available only by request, provided that one knows it exists.

My bill would, for the first time, create a single website where the public and Members of Congress can easily search, sort, and download all congressionally mandated reports from agencies.

Ultimately, this will help us conduct better research and oversight of these agencies and will allow the public to learn about what agencies are doing with their hard-earned tax dollars.

This bill is meant to be a window into the workings of government to ensure that the government's business is done transparently and is accountable to the people it serves.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this straightforward, commonsense bill and vote "yes" on H.R. 736.

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROUDA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 736, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LUCAS LOWE POST OFFICE

Mr. ROUDA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1250) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 11158 Highway 146 North in Hardin, Texas, as the "Lucas Lowe Post Office", as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1250

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,