

with annotations, also referred to as CONAN.

You actually have to be as strong as Conan to lift this. My mother tells me that at birth, I was 6 pounds, 8 ounces. This is 8 pounds, 14 ounces, so it is larger than small DEREK KILMER.

The task of printing this behemoth has fallen to CRS, and the most recent CONAN print cost \$1 million per year to print, not to mention the considerable staff time and attention spent formatting, printing, and distributing said books.

The law requiring printed CONAN copies predated widespread internet access. Since 2019, the Library of Congress and CRS have made this same information available online, free of cost, with the added benefit of real-time updates that just aren't possible with printed books.

This bill simply replaces the requirement for the Library of Congress and CRS to prepare hardbound versions of the CONAN and replaces it with a requirement to prepare digital versions and publish them online instead, as they already have been doing.

Through this bill, the American people can receive better and more up-to-date information online. We can save taxpayer dollars and valuable CRS staff capacity. We can eliminate the 8 pounds and 14 ounces of print. I personally would like to eliminate 8 pounds and 14 ounces after the weight I have gained over the August recess.

I think this is a commonsense bill, and I thank my colleague, Chairwoman BICE, for her leadership on this.

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

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE) to speak on the bill.

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned by my colleague Mr. KILMER, this is the Constitution Annotated, or CONAN, as it is better known today. Its origins date back to 1797 when Congress passed legislation requiring that every Member of Congress be provided a copy of the Constitution.

These copies were then expanded to include Supreme Court case citations so that Members could see which clauses of the Constitution the Court used to decide those cases.

As the number of citations grew, Members became frustrated with the new format. The hundreds of citations listed under each clause of the Constitution were useless to most of them because they had no idea what the cases were about and what questions were before the Court.

In 1921, Congress passed a resolution requiring reprints of the Constitution to include explanatory language that would make sense of all the case citations throughout. This requirement made the reprints much more useful to the Members, and the format created then is one that is still used today.

Initially, CONAN was printed every 10 years or so, but by 1970, Members

began to complain that it was outdated almost as soon as it was printed. They addressed this by passing a resolution requiring that a paperbound supplement to CONAN be printed every 2 years, in addition to printing the hardbound version of the CONAN every 10.

Since 1972, that is what we have done: Print a hardbound version of CONAN every 10 years and a paperbound supplement every 2.

CONAN obviously has a rich history dating back over two centuries. The Constitution provides the framework for our government, and understanding that framework and how the Supreme Court has applied it to its decisions over the years is as essential today as it was over 200 years ago.

Nothing about H.R. 7592 erases or changes this important history. In fact, the legislative history of CONAN makes it clear that Congress has consistently prioritized up-to-date interpretation and analysis of court cases, and this resolution honors that longstanding tradition.

Today, people rely on digital sources for the most up-to-date information. This is true whether we are talking about breaking news, airfares, restaurant reviews, or Supreme Court case citations.

CONAN is a case in point. According to the GPO, the number of print copies of CONAN requested in 2012 by the House, Senate, and Joint Committee on Printing was just over 1,000. Ten years later, in 2022, the number of requested copies dropped to just 659.

It is no coincidence that this drop in requests for the hardbound version of CONAN coincides with the 2019 launch of a digital version of CONAN.

Over the past 5 years, the CONAN website has become an invaluable resource to individuals, citizens, schools, libraries, and, of course, Congress. The user-friendly site has received more than 28 million visits since it was created and features hundreds of pages of constitutional analysis and content.

The site is publicly accessible, easy to search, and provides links to Supreme Court decisions. Perhaps most importantly, it is updated in real time by CRS.

All of this raises the question of why we are wasting taxpayer dollars printing this giant hardcover version of CONAN along with paperbound supplements when a superior digital version already exists.

According to the CBO, replacing this version of CONAN with a digital version would reduce the Library of Congress' operating costs by millions over the next few years.

Eliminating the print requirement will also eliminate inefficient use of CRS staff time. In addition to updating the online version of CONAN in real time, CRS staff have to spend countless hours formatting and paginating the print version of CONAN. A more efficient CRS ultimately benefits Congress and, in turn, our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, replacing the CONAN print requirement with a digital requirement is a no-brainer. The digital version provides Members and other users with the most up-to-date information and analysis available at a significant cost savings for taxpayers.

History shows that Congress has consistently taken steps to ensure that CONAN meets the evolving needs of Members and other users. Passing this legislation is a logical next step in maintaining CONAN's relevancy and usefulness, both to Congress and to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 7592.

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Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I don't have any additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I again thank the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE), the Modernization Subcommittee chairwoman, for her leadership on this measure that will save taxpayer dollars.

I also recognize, once again, the subcommittee ranking member Mr. KILMER as well as Mr. CAREY and Mr. MORELLE. I urge all of my colleagues who want to save taxpayers \$5 million to vote in support of H.R. 7592. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7592.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MODERNIZING THE CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE'S ACCESS TO DATA ACT

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7593) to enhance the authority of the Director of the Congressional Research Service to obtain information directly from agencies of the Federal government.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7593

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 "Modernizing the Congressional Research Service's Access to Data Act".

SEC. 2. ACCESS OF CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION.

(a) DIRECT ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—Section 203 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 166) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (j) as subsection (k); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (i) the following new subsection:

“(j)(1) In carrying out the duties and functions of the Congressional Research Service

under subsection (d), the Director is authorized to secure books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, documents, secure information, and other data in all forms directly from the various departments, agencies, and establishments of the executive branch of the Government and the regulatory agencies and commissions of the Government as the Director determines to be necessary to carry out the request, and all such departments, agencies, establishments, and regulatory agencies and commissions shall furnish the Director with all such available material in a timely manner.

“(2) With respect to books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, documents, secure information, and other data in all forms obtained under paragraph (1), the Director shall maintain the same level of confidentiality as is required by law of the department, agency, establishment, or regulatory agency or commission from which it is obtained. Officers and employees of the Congressional Research Service shall be subject to the same statutory penalties for unauthorized disclosure or use as officers or employees of the department, agency, establishment, or regulatory agency or commission from which it is obtained.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 203(d)(1) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 166(d)(1)) is amended in the matter following subparagraph (C) by striking “and in the performance of this duty” and all that follows through “comply with such request;”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. KILMER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 7593, the Modernizing the Congressional Research Service's Access to Data Act.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7593, the Modernizing the Congressional Research Service's Access to Data Act.

Congress is a dynamic institution. The way it operates today is different from how it operated 50 years ago. It is probably safe to say that 50 years from now, Congress will look quite different than it does once again today.

The Committee on House Administration is working to modernize Congress. The Subcommittee on Modernization's mandate is to improve and update how Congress works on behalf of the American people. There is no expiration date on this work. Because society evolves, Congress must do the same.

Congress must be capable of continually adapting to address both the issues of the day and Americans' needs. As Congress evolves, its support agencies must do the same. They must be capable of working in a way that reflects how Congress works.

It has been over 50 years since Congress updated CRS' authorizing statute, and much has changed since then in terms of how Congress operates. The Federal policy landscape has grown more and more complex, and back home Americans are confronting a vast range of challenges and are increasingly seeking our help.

As a result, Members are relying on CRS more than ever for supporting their legislative and representational duties. In order for CRS to meet the growing demand, it needs quick access to current and reliable data and information.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7593 fulfills this need. It updates CRS' statute to ensure that the agency can request data and information from Federal agencies to support its work on behalf of Congress. To be clear, we are talking about information and data that Congress and its support agencies have an established right to access.

This change to the statute reflects how Congress has changed over the past five decades and will greatly improve CRS' ability to support how we work today. I have advocated for a more modern CRS, and this measure fits into those efforts.

I thank the Modernization Subcommittee chairwoman STEPHANIE BICE for her leadership in bringing H.R. 7593 forward and more generally for her efforts to improve and modernize CRS. I also thank the Modernization Subcommittee ranking member, DEREK KILMER, as well as Representatives CAREY and MORELLE for their bipartisan support of this measure.

I urge my colleagues to join me in strengthening CRS by supporting H.R. 7593, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

The second bill we are considering today from the Modernization Subcommittee is H.R. 7593, the Modernizing the Congressional Research Service's Access to Data Act, which aims to address issues regarding CRS' access to Federal data.

As with the first bill, CRS itself has asked for this change, and it is a change that will again help the agency keep up with the times. When CRS' statute was developed in the 1970s, it stated that Federal agencies need to comply with data requests from Congress to serve congressional committees, and it mentions that CRS is responsible for otherwise assisting offices with informational requests, too. This stems from the committee-centric nature of Congress at the time.

However, given the lack of explicit reference to personal offices, CRS indicated to the Modernization Subcommittee that they, at times, have struggled to access necessary information from Federal agencies to execute their mission of serving committees and individual personal offices alike.

CRS should be able to update reports on nationally significant issues

proactively and simultaneously respond to specific Member office requests. Additionally, their access should be on par with that provided to other legislative branch support agencies, like the Congressional Budget Office, for example.

Accordingly, this bill updates the material CRS can request from Federal agencies to cover CRS' broad mission without the existing committee-specific limitation. The bill requires CRS to maintain the broad confidentiality protections for data as required by law of the agency providing the information. It also ensures the CRS director themselves would oversee the process of these Member-specific requests to ensure they align with CRS' long-standing objective, nonpartisan mission, and that they would not create additional burdens for Federal agencies.

It matters to me, to our Modernization Subcommittee, and hopefully to all my colleagues here that CRS has the Federal data resources it needs to do its job, to serve Congress as we serve the people we represent.

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

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE) to speak on this bill.

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 7593, the Modernizing the Congressional Research Service's Access to Data Act.

In order for Congress to fulfill its Article I obligations and act as the first among coequal branches of government as the Framers intended, its support agencies need to be fully equipped to assist Congress in all of its legislative and representative duties.

When our support agencies falter, we falter, and it is incumbent upon us to fix what is not working. CRS is a case in point. The agency is bound by statute to outdated rules that do not reflect how Congress works today.

CRS' statute was last updated in 1970, and back then committees were very much at the center of the policy-making process. The agency's authority to request data and information from Federal agencies reflected that reality. Requests for data and information could only be made to support the work of committees.

More than five decades later, CRS continues to operate under this narrow and outdated request authority. Congress has evolved as an institution, but in many ways CRS has not. Its ability to fully support today's Congress is hindered by a statute drafted to support yesterday's Congress.

Committees continue to play an important role in the legislative process, but so do Members. Members today are doing more work on behalf of their constituents and relying more heavily on CRS for support. Whether they need data and information to better understand and address a problem in their

district or in anticipation of an emerging policy debate, Members rely on CRS for its nonpartisan expertise.

All of this work, for committees and for Members, depends on CRS having access to current and reliable data. It is the basis of the objective and informed analysis on which Congress depends to fulfill its Article I obligations.

When Federal agencies are compelled to share data and information with CRS only when it is requested on behalf of a committee, CRS is unable to fulfill its statutory obligation to support Congress in all of its duties.

H.R. 7593 fixes this limitation by granting CRS the authority to secure information and data from Federal agencies, as necessary, to carry out congressional requests; not committee requests, but congressional requests.

This fix is neither groundbreaking nor controversial. There is a nearly century-long chain of Supreme Court precedents that recognize the authority of Congress and, by extension, the legislative support agencies, to gather information from the executive branch.

In fact, GAO and CBO, CRS' sister support agencies, already enjoy greater access authorities because, as Congress has added to their responsibilities, it has also provided them with the additional tools and authorities needed to carry out that additional work.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for CRS. The agency's work has expanded tremendously since the 1970s, but Congress has failed to pair its extra responsibilities with extra support.

In granting CRS greater access, this bill requires CRS to maintain the same level of confidentiality for the data and information it receives, as is required by law of the agency from which it obtained. Any CRS employee who violates this requirement will be subject to the same statutory penalties that an employee of a providing agency would face. These provisions, it should be noted, mirror CBO's rigorous confidentiality authorities.

CRS has a long-established record of not making inappropriate or overly expansive information and data requests. Nothing about this resolution changes that. The agency routinely engages in an internal consultation process to ensure that requests are properly scoped and tailored. Maintaining these guardrails around its requests helps CRS properly evaluate the potential ways that data and information may be used.

The agency's strict adherence to its statutory mandate to advise and assist Congress without partisan bias has and will continue to guide its requests.

Updating CRS' statute to better reflect how Congress works today is an Article I strengthening endeavor. It does not concern politics or partisanship. It concerns institutions, plain and simple.

When CRS is unable to fully support Congress, Congress cannot fully act as a coequal branch of government, and when CRS is unable to fully support us

as Members in our legislative and representational duties, we are unable to fully support our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that both of these scenarios are unacceptable. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 7593.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I don't have any additional speakers. If the chairman is prepared to close, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I again thank the Modernization Subcommittee chairwoman, STEPHANIE BICE, for her leadership on this measure. I also thank Ranking Member KILMER, as well as Representatives CAREY and MORELLE.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7593, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7593.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFIRMATION OF CONGRESSIONAL OBSERVER ACCESS ACT OF 2023

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6513) to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to confirm the requirement that States allow access to designated congressional election observers to observe the election administration procedures in congressional elections.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6513

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Confirmation Of Congressional Observer Access Act of 2023” or the “COCOA Act of 2023”.

(b) FINDINGS RELATING TO CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Article 1, section 5, clause 1 of the Constitution grants Congress the authority to “be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members”.

(2) The House of Representatives serves as the final arbiter over any contest to the seating of any putative Member-elect.

(3) Congress has exercised this authority—and responsibility—since our Nation's very beginning, from the First Congress through the One Hundred Eighteenth Congress. Over our history, election contests have remained a normal and regular part of the biennial process for electing, recognizing, and seating new Members. Although Congress has opted to revise the statutory framework by which it considers election contests, consideration of such contests has been a regular and recurring part of Congress' constitutional prerogatives and work. For example, across our

Nation's history, more than approximately 610 elections have been contested in the House—an average of more than 5 per Congress. Indeed, even discounting the Reconstruction period and its surge in election contests, there have been 110 contested election cases considered in the House since 1933—an average of more than 2 contests per Congress.

(4) These election contest procedures are contained in the precedents of each House of Congress. Further, for the House of Representatives the procedures exist under the Federal Contested Elections Act.

(5) For decades, the House of Representatives has appointed its staff to watch the administration of congressional elections in the States and territories. Critically, congressional observers serve to gather real-time information and data for the House in anticipation of an election contest being filed.

SEC. 2. ACCESS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS.

(a) ACCESS REQUIRED.—Title III of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21081 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating section 304 and 305 as sections 305 and 306; and

(2) by inserting after section 303 the following new section:

“SEC. 304. ACCESS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS.

“(a) FINDING OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.—Congress finds that, regardless of legislative action, it has the authority to send congressional election observers to observe polling locations, any location where processing, scanning, tabulating, canvassing, recounting, auditing, or certifying voting results is occurring, or any other part of the process associated with elections for Federal office under the authorities granted under article 1, section 5, clause 1 and article 1, section 4, clause 1 of the Constitution of the United States. Procedures described herein do not establish any new authorities or procedures with respect to Congress' constitutional authority to observe congressional elections but are provided simply to permit a convenient statutory reference for existing congressional authority and activity.

“(b) REQUIRING STATES TO PROVIDE ACCESS FOR OBSERVERS.—

“(1) REQUIREMENT.—A State shall provide each individual who is acting as a designated congressional election observer for an election for Federal office with full access to clearly observe all elements of election administration procedures, including, but not limited to, access to any area in which a ballot is cast, processed, scanned, tabulated, canvassed, recounted, audited, or certified, including during pre- and post-election procedures.

“(2) RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVITIES OF OBSERVERS.—No designated congressional election observer may handle a ballot or election equipment (whether voting or nonvoting or whether tabulating or nontabulating), advocate for any position or candidate, take any action to reduce ballot secrecy or voter privacy, take any action to interfere with the ability of a voter to cast a ballot or an election administrator to carry the administrator's duties, or otherwise interfere with the election administration process.

“(3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall prohibit a designated congressional election observer from asking questions of an election administrator, election official, or election worker, or any other State or local official.

“(c) CONDUCT OF OBSERVERS.—

“(1) REMOVAL.—

“(A) AUTHORIZATION REMOVAL BY ELECTION OFFICIAL.—If a State or local election official