

Public Law 115–173
115th Congress

An Act

To require the Director of the National Background Investigations Bureau to submit a report on the backlog of personnel security clearance investigations, and for other purposes.

May 22, 2018
[H.R. 3210]

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 “Securely Expediting Clearances Through Reporting Transparency Act of 2018” or the “SECRET Act of 2018”.

Securely
Expediting
Clearances
Through
Reporting
Transparency
Act of 2018.
5 USC 11001
note.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

- (1) the term “Bureau” means the National Background Investigations Bureau of the Office;
- (2) the term “Director” means the Director of National Intelligence acting as the Security Executive Agent; and
- (3) the term “Office” means the Office of Personnel Management acting as the Suitability and Credentialing Executive Agent.

SEC. 3. REPORT ON BACKLOG OF PERSONNEL SECURITY CLEARANCE INVESTIGATIONS.

Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and quarterly thereafter for 5 years, the Director of the Bureau, in coordination with the Director, shall submit to Congress a report on the backlog of personnel security clearance investigations at the Bureau for the most recent full calendar quarter, which shall include—

Time period.
Coordination.

- (1) the size of the backlog of personnel security clearance investigations of the Bureau, including, for each sensitivity level—
 - (A) the number of interim clearances granted;
 - (B) the number of initial investigations for Federal employees;
 - (C) the number of periodic reinvestigations for Federal employees;
 - (D) the number of initial investigations for employees of Federal contractors;
 - (E) the number of periodic reinvestigations for employees of Federal contractors;
 - (F) the number of initial investigations for employees of, and employees of contractors of, the Department of Defense;

(G) the number of periodic reinvestigations for employees of and employees of contractors of the Department of Defense;

(H) the number of employees of the Bureau conducting background investigations for the Bureau; and

(I) the number of employees of contractors of the Bureau conducting background investigations for the Bureau;

(2) the average length of time, for each sensitivity level, for the Bureau to carry out an initial investigation and a periodic reinvestigation;

(3) a discussion of the factors contributing to the average length of time to carry out an initial investigation and a periodic reinvestigation;

Plan.
Recommendations.

(4) a backlog mitigation plan, which shall include—

(A) the identification of the cause of, and recommendations to remedy, the backlog at the Bureau;

(B) the steps the Director of the Bureau shall take to reduce the backlog;

(C) process reforms to improve efficiencies in, and the quality of, background investigations by the Bureau; and

(D) a projection of when the backlog at the Bureau will be sufficiently reduced to meet required timeliness standards; and

(5) a description of improvements in the information and data security of the Bureau.

Coordination.

SEC. 4. REPORT ON SECURITY CLEARANCE INVESTIGATIONS OF PERSONNEL OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Administration of the Executive Office of the President, in coordination with the Director and the Director of the Office, shall submit to Congress a report that explains the process for conducting and adjudicating security clearance investigations for personnel of the Executive Office of the President, including personnel of the White House Office.

Consultation.

SEC. 5. REPORT ON COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH BIFURCATED BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION SYSTEMS.

Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office, in consultation with the other members of the Suitability and Security Clearance Performance Accountability Council established under Executive Order 13467 (73 Fed. Reg. 38103) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, shall submit to Congress a report on the cost of maintaining comprehensive background investigations capability within the Office under the control or direction of the Bureau and a background investigations capability for Department of Defense personnel under the control or direction of the Department of Defense for implementation of the plan referenced in section 925 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law 115–91), as compared to the cost of sustaining a single Government-wide background investigations enterprise.

SEC. 6. REPORTS ON CONTINUOUS EVALUATION, RECIPROCITY, AND TIMELINESS MEASURES.

Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to Congress reports that provide—

(1) the status of implementing continuous evaluation Government-wide, including—

(A) the number of agencies with continuous evaluation programs and how many of those programs are currently conducting automated records checks of the required data sources as identified by the Director; and

(B) a discussion of the barriers for agencies to implement continuous evaluation programs, including any requirement under a statute, regulation, Executive Order, or other administrative requirement;

(2) a detailed explanation of efforts by agencies to meet requirements for reciprocal recognition to access classified information, including—

(A) the range of the length of time for agencies to grant reciprocal recognition to access classified information;

(B) additional requirements for reinvestigations or readjudications, by agency; and

(C) any other barriers to the timely granting of reciprocity, by agency, including any requirement under a statute, regulation, Executive Order, or other administrative requirement; and

(3) a review of whether the schedule for processing security clearances under section 3001 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (50 U.S.C. 3341) should be modified.

Review.

SEC. 7. REVIEW AND UPDATE OF POSITION DESIGNATION GUIDANCE.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

(1) the term “agency” has the meaning given the term in Executive Order 13467 (73 Fed. Reg. 38103), or any successor thereto;

(2) the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives;

(3) the term “background investigation” means any investigation required for the purpose of determining the—

(A) eligibility of a covered individual for logical and physical access to Federally controlled facilities or information systems;

(B) suitability or fitness of a covered individual for Federal employment;

(C) eligibility of a covered individual for access to classified information or to hold a national security sensitive position; or

(D) fitness of a covered individual to perform work for or on behalf of the United States Government as a contractor employee; and

(4) the term “covered individual”—

(A) means a person who performs work for or on behalf of the executive branch or seeks to perform work for or on behalf of the executive branch;

(B) is not limited to Federal employees;

(C) includes all persons, not excluded under subparagraph (D), who require eligibility for access to classified information or eligibility to hold a sensitive position, including, but not limited to, contractors, subcontractors, licensees, certificate holders, grantees, experts, consultants, and government employees; and

(D) does not include—

- (i) the President;
- (ii) employees of the President under section 105 or 107 of title 3, United States Code (except to the extent otherwise directed by the President);
- (iii) the Vice President; or
- (iv) employees of the Vice President under section 106 of title 3, United States Code, or an annual legislative branch appropriations Act (except to the extent otherwise directed by the Vice President).

Determinations.
Deadline.
Recommendations.

(b) REVIEW AND UPDATING.—

(1) INITIAL REVIEW AND UPDATE OF GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director and the Director of the Office shall review and make recommendations to Congress and the President as appropriate to issue guidance to assist agencies in determining—

(A) position sensitivity designation; and

(B) the appropriate background investigation to initiate for each position designation.

Time period.
President.

(2) REVIEWS AND REVISIONS OF POSITION DESIGNATIONS.—Not less frequently than every 4 years, the President, acting through relevant agencies (as determined by the President) and in accordance with the guidance described in paragraph (1), shall review and, if necessary, revise the position designation of positions within agencies.

President.

(c) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30 days after completing a review under subsection (b)(2), the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on—

(1) any issues identified in the review; and

(2) the number of position designations revised as a result of the review.

(d) NO CHANGE IN AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this section limits or expands the authority of any agency to designate a position as sensitive or as requiring its occupant to have access to classified information.

Approved May 22, 2018.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 3210:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 115–258 (Comm. on Oversight and Government Reform).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 115–185 (Comm. on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 163 (2017): July 26, considered and passed House.

Vol. 164 (2018): Mar. 15, considered and passed Senate, amended.

May 7, House concurred in Senate amendment.

DAILY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (2018):

May 22, Presidential statement.