

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1564

To establish the Commission on Freedom of Information Act Processing
Delays.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 14, 2011

Mr. SHERMAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

To establish the Commission on Freedom of Information
Act Processing Delays.

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. COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

4 **ACT PROCESSING DELAYS.**

5 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the
6 “Faster FOIA Act of 2011”.

7 (b) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established the Com-
8 mission on Freedom of Information Act Processing Delays
9 (in this Act referred to as the “Commission” for the pur-
10 pose of conducting a study relating to methods to help

1 reduce delays in processing requests submitted to Federal
2 agencies under section 552 of title 5, United States Code
3 (commonly referred to as the “Freedom of Information
4 Act”).

5 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall be
7 composed of 12 members of whom—

8 (A) 2 shall be appointed by the chairman
9 of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Sen-
10 ate;

11 (B) 2 shall be appointed by the ranking
12 member of the Committee on the Judiciary of
13 the Senate;

14 (C) 2 shall be appointed by the chairman
15 of the Committee on Government Reform of the
16 House of Representatives;

17 (D) 2 shall be appointed by the ranking
18 member of the Committee on Government Re-
19 form of the House of Representatives;

20 (E) 1 shall be appointed by the Attorney
21 General of the United States;

22 (F) 1 shall be appointed by the Director of
23 the Office of Management and Budget;

24 (G) 1 shall be appointed by the Archivist
25 of the United States; and

1 (H) 1 shall be appointed by the Comp-
2 troller General of the United States.

3 (2) QUALIFICATIONS OF CONGRESSIONAL AP-
4 POINTEES.—Of the 2 appointees under each of sub-
5 paragraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of paragraph (1)
6 at least 1 shall have experience as a FOIA re-
7 questor, or in the fields of library science, informa-
8 tion management, or public access to Government
9 information.

10 (3) TIMELINESS OF APPOINTMENTS.—Appoint-
11 ments to the Commission shall be made as expedi-
12 tiously as possible, but not later than 60 days after
13 the date of enactment of this Act.

14 (d) STUDY.—The Commission shall conduct a study
15 to—

16 (1) identify methods that—

17 (A) will help reduce delays in the proc-
18 essing of requests submitted to Federal agen-
19 cies under section 552 of title 5, United States
20 Code; and

21 (B) ensure the efficient and equitable ad-
22 ministration of that section throughout the
23 Federal Government;

24 (2) examine whether the system for charging
25 fees and granting waivers of fees under section 552

1 of title 5, United States Code, needs to be reformed
2 in order to reduce delays in processing requests; and

3 (3) examine and determine—

4 (A) why the Federal Government’s use of
5 the exemptions under section 552(b) of title 5,
6 United States Code, increased during fiscal
7 year 2009;

8 (B) the reasons for any increase, including
9 whether the increase was warranted and wheth-
10 er the increase contributed to FOIA processing
11 delays;

12 (C) what efforts were made by Federal
13 agencies to comply with President Obama’s
14 January 21, 2009, Presidential Memorandum
15 on Freedom of Information Act Requests and
16 whether those efforts were successful;

17 (D) any recommendations on how the use
18 of exemptions under section 552(b) of title 5,
19 United States Code, may be limited; and

20 (E)(i) whether any disparities in proc-
21 essing, processing times, and completeness of
22 responses to FOIA requestors have occurred
23 based upon political considerations, ideological
24 viewpoints, the identity of the requestors, affli-

1 ation with the media, or affiliation with advo-
2 cacy groups;

3 (ii) if any disparities have occurred, why
4 such disparities have occurred; and

5 (iii) the extent to which political appointees
6 have been involved in the FOIA process.

7 (e) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
8 of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall submit a
9 report to Congress and the President containing the re-
10 sults of the study under this section, which shall include—

11 (1) a description of the methods identified by
12 the study;

13 (2) the conclusions and recommendations of the
14 Commission regarding—

15 (A) each method identified; and

16 (B) the charging of fees and granting of
17 waivers of fees; and

18 (3) recommendations for legislative or adminis-
19 trative actions to implement the conclusions of the
20 Commission.

21 (f) STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERV-
22 ICES.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Archivist of the United
24 States shall provide to the Commission such staff
25 and administrative support services, including re-

1 search assistance at the request of the Commission,
2 as necessary for the Commission to perform its func-
3 tions efficiently and in accordance with this section.

4 (2) PAYMENT OF EXPENSES.—

5 (A) STAFF SALARIES.—The Archivist of
6 the United States shall pay staff expenses relat-
7 ing to salaries under this subsection from avail-
8 able appropriations in the applicable account
9 for salaries of the National Archives and
10 Records Administration.

11 (B) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERV-
12 ICES.—Except as provided under subparagraph
13 (A), the Archivist of the United States shall pay
14 staff and administrative expenses under this
15 subsection from available appropriations in the
16 operating expenses account of the National Ar-
17 chives and Records Administration.

18 (3) APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS.—Expenses
19 paid under this subsection shall not form the basis
20 for additional appropriations requests from the Na-
21 tional Archives and Records Administration in the
22 future.

23 (g) INFORMATION.—To the extent permitted by law,
24 the heads of executive agencies, the Government Account-
25 ability Office, and the Congressional Research Service

1 shall provide to the Commission such information as the
2 Commission may require to carry out its functions.

3 (h) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Members of the
4 Commission shall serve without compensation for services
5 performed for the Commission.

6 (i) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The members of the Com-
8 mission shall be allowed travel expenses, including
9 per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized
10 for employees of agencies under subchapter I of
11 chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while
12 away from their homes or regular places of business
13 in the performance of services for the Commission.

14 (2) PAYMENT OF EXPENSES.—The Adminis-
15 trator of General Services shall pay travel expenses
16 under this subsection from available appropriations
17 in the operating expenses account of the General
18 Services Administration.

19 (3) APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS.—Expenses
20 paid under this subsection shall not form the basis
21 for additional appropriations requests from the Na-
22 tional Archives and Records Administration in the
23 future.

24 (j) TRANSPARENCY.—All meetings of the Commis-
25 sion shall be open to the public, except that a meeting,

1 or any portion of it, may be closed to the public if it con-
2 cerns matters or information described in chapter 552b(c)
3 of title 5, United States Code. Interested persons shall be
4 permitted to appear at open meetings and present oral or
5 written statements on the subject matter of the meeting.
6 The Commission may administer oaths or affirmations to
7 any person appearing before the Commission.

8 (k) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate
9 30 days after the submission of the report under sub-
10 section (e).

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