

I am concerned for Secretary Austin's health and wish him well. However, the Department of Defense's lack of transparency surrounding his absence is very concerning.

Critical communication breakdowns like these could have disastrous results and put our men and women in uniform at risk.

To ensure America remains capable of combating threats wherever and whenever they occur, we not only need an unparalleled fighting force but also a strong chain of command among our military's leadership that cannot be compromised.

That is why I introduced the Securing the Chain of Command Continuity Act alongside my colleague on the other side of the aisle, Congressman DAVIS of North Carolina, to prevent any similar chain of command breakdowns in the future and preserve the integrity of our national security.

My bipartisan legislation would amend existing law to require all members of the National Security Council to notify the executive office of the President, the Comptroller General of the United States, and to each Chamber of Congress within 24 hours of any planned or emergent medical incapacitation.

In the event this notification does not occur, a comprehensive report must be submitted providing transparency surrounding the incapacitation and related notification failure within 30 days.

At a time when our servicemembers are facing lethal attacks from our adversaries overseas, my bill will help ensure continuous chain of command so that our military and national defense systems can operate seamlessly in case of an emergency and achieve mission success.

It is my goal in Congress to advance legislation that protects our country, our citizens, and our men and women in uniform.

That is why I drafted this national security bill in a way that all commonsense Members can support, no matter which side of the aisle they are on.

I was pleased when the Securing the Chain of Command Continuity Act was passed unanimously out of the House Oversight Committee in February, proving just how nonpartisan this effort is. I thank Congressman DAVIS of North Carolina for his partnership with me on this critical issue.

The world is a dangerous place. We can't afford a lack of transparency from our senior military leaders. We must preserve the integrity of our national security, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this commonsense, bipartisan legislation that will keep our country and our military men and women safe.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member RASKIN for yielding time.

I rise in support of H.R. 6972, the Securing Chain of Command Continuity Act. As a proud United States Air Force veteran, I join my colleague, Representative KIGGANS of Virginia, who also served our country in uniform, to introduce this bipartisan bill.

If we have learned anything from the past several months, it is, indeed, we are in a more dangerous world. As tensions and threats rise across the globe, timely responses are vital to safeguarding the American people and saving lives.

Congress must require National Security Council agencies to provide a notice of the incapacitation of their agency heads within 24 hours. That is reasonable.

This requirement for our Nation's leaders is a minimum expectation to ensure transparency and accountability. The American people deserve nothing less, and I support the legislation.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his eloquent remarks, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), my friend.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Mr. Speaker, I spent over 25 years in the United States military. I designed elements from as large as a SEAL team down to a small tactical unit.

The first thing that you establish is something called CCIRs, Commander's Critical Information Requirements, and the first one is: Where is the commander? Is the commander in place and able to make decisions?

Unfortunately, the most powerful Department of Defense in the history of the world, led by Lloyd Austin, failed to do the most simple task that is required of any commander, and that is to inform the Commander in Chief of his presence.

This, to me, is another sign of an incredibly incompetent Department of Defense and the Biden administration's inability to lead and protect this Nation.

I am so thankful that my colleagues across the aisle have identified this also, and they know that the Biden administration must be held accountable for their lack of leadership in protecting the United States of America.

It is unquestionable that the world is a much more dangerous place under the Biden administration and under Secretary Austin's leadership of the Department of Defense.

Again, I thank my colleagues from across the aisle for this bipartisan effort to hold the Biden administration accountable and to make sure that any member of the National Security Council who is incapable of performing their duties is informing the President in a timely manner.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, we had such a nice bipartisan spirit going. I almost want to

bite my tongue, but I do have to respond to the last speaker who took a gratuitous shot at President Biden and the Biden administration, which has moved very quickly to get behind this legislation and to address this gap in the law.

We do need to always establish the chain of command, and we need to know, as the gentleman from Wisconsin was saying, where is the Commander in Chief? Where is the leader?

That was the question everybody was asking on January 6 when this institution, this body, came under brutal, merciless attack by a mob incited by the former President.

Nearly 150 of our police officers were wounded, brutalized, and hospitalized in that attack, and everybody was asking this very question the gentleman from Wisconsin was asking, which is: Where is the Commander in Chief? Where is the leader? Where is the National Guard?

I am sorry to have to make that refutation of the last interjection by the gentleman from Wisconsin. Again, I thank Mr. LATURNER for the bipartisan spirit with which he brings this legislation forward, and I strongly support it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time. We were so close, Mr. Speaker. So close.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my House colleagues to support this commonsense government transparency bill to address a relevant national security concern.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. LATURNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6972, 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.

INFORMATION QUALITY ASSURANCE ACT

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7219) to ensure that Federal agencies rely on the best reasonably available scientific, technical, demographic, economic, and statistical information and evidence to develop, issue or inform the public of the nature and bases of Federal agency rules and guidance, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7219

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 "Information Quality Assurance Act".

SEC. 2. INFORMATION QUALITY ASSURANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter 1 of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“§ 3522. Information Quality Assurance.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of the Information Quality Assurance Act, the Director shall—

“(1) with public and Federal agency involvement, update the guidelines issued under subsection (a) of the Information Quality Act—

“(A) to provide policy and procedural guidance to the heads of Federal agencies for better ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of influential information or evidence—

“(i) used by the heads of Federal agencies to develop or issue rules and guidance; or

“(ii) disseminated to the public to inform the public about the nature and bases of such rules and guidance; and

“(B) in a manner consistent with—

“(i) this chapter; and

“(ii) the amendments made by the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-435); and

“(2) make the guidelines updated under paragraph (1) available on the website of the Office of Management and Budget.

“(b) CONTENT OF GUIDELINES.—In updating the guidelines under subsection (a), the Director shall require that the head of each Federal agency to which the guidelines apply, not later than 1 year after the Director updates such guidelines—

“(1) update any guidelines issued by the head of the Federal agency under the Information Quality Act to ensure that, in the case of influential information or evidence, the best reasonably available information and evidence is relied on in developing, issuing, or informing the public about the rules and guidance of the Federal agency;

“(2) publish the guidelines updated by the head of the Federal agency under paragraph (1) on the website of the Federal agency;

“(3) ensure the administrative mechanisms established under subparagraph (B) of section (b)(2) of the Information Quality Act are available with respect to seeking and obtaining the correction of any influential information or evidence that the Federal agency uses to develop or issue a rule or guideline, or disseminates to the public to inform the public of the nature and basis of any rule or guidance of the Federal agency, that does not comply with the guidelines issued under paragraph (1); and

“(4) include in the report required under subparagraph (C) of subsection (b)(2) of the Information Quality Act the information described under that subparagraph with respect to any complaints received by the Federal agency related to the accuracy of influential information or evidence the Federal agency uses to develop, issue, or inform the public of the nature and bases of rules or guidance.

“(c) PUBLIC DISCLOSURE.—

“(1) AVAILABILITY.—Except as provided under paragraph (2), the head of the Federal agency shall make available in the docket for the rulemaking of any rule of the Federal agency, or in the administrative record for any guidance, in a timely manner before the promulgation of the rule or issuance of the guidance document—

“(A) any model, methodology, or source of scientific, technical, demographic, economic, or statistical information or evidence upon which the head of the Federal agency—

“(i) relied on in developing or issuing such rule or guidance; or

“(ii) proposes to rely on in developing or issuing such rule or guidance; and

“(B) an identification of whether each such model, methodology, or source constitutes, or may constitute, influential information or evidence.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The head of the Federal agency—

“(i) shall implement paragraph (1) in a manner consistent with this chapter and section 552a of title 5; and

“(ii) may not make available in the docket for the rulemaking of any rule of the Federal agency, or in the administrative record for any guidance, information that is prohibited from being disclosed to the public under any statute.

“(B) EXPLANATION TO BE INCLUDED IN DOCKET OR ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD.—If the head of the Federal agency does not make a model, methodology, or source available under paragraph (1)(A) pursuant to paragraph (2)(A), the head of the Federal agency shall include in the docket for the rulemaking or the administrative record for the guidance document—

“(i) an explanation as to why such information cannot be made publicly available, including a citation to the applicable law and policy; and

“(ii) a description of any steps being taken to increase access to such information, even if the information cannot be made public.

“(3) FORMAT OF SOURCE.—The head of each Federal agency shall make any model, methodology, or source required to be made available under paragraph (1)(A) available as an open Government data asset.

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) EVIDENCE.—The term ‘evidence’ has the meaning given that term in section 3561.

“(2) INFLUENTIAL INFORMATION OR EVIDENCE.—The term ‘influential information or evidence’ means information or evidence (including scientific, technical, demographic, economic, financial, and statistical information or evidence) that the head of the Federal agency can reasonably determine will have or does have a clear or substantial impact on—

“(A) developing or issuing a proposed or final rule of the Federal agency; or

“(B) informing the public of the nature and basis of any rule or guidance of the Federal agency.

“(3) INFORMATION QUALITY ACT.—The term ‘Information Quality Act’ means section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2001 (Public Law 106-554).”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to section 3521 the following:

“3522. Information Quality Assurance.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. LATURNER) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas.

□ 1615

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATURNER. 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 this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, the Information Quality Assur-

ance Act. Each year, thousands of regulations are imposed as an added burden on the American public. The Code of Federal Regulations, in which these rules are housed, spans 243 volumes that contain over 180,000 single-spaced pages. Agency guidance explaining these regulations to the public likely spans millions more pages.

If we must have rules imposed by Federal regulatory agencies, we should, at the very least, ensure that regulatory agencies rely on the best available information. Unfortunately, agencies frequently do not rely on the best available information to create their regulations.

Year after year, the Federal courts are clogged with litigation brought by regulated parties who point out that Federal agencies have acted based on flawed information. Over the years, Congress has tried to improve the situation.

In 2000, Congress enacted the Information Quality Act, which charged the Office of Management and Budget and each Federal agency to adopt guidelines to ensure agencies rely on high-quality information.

In 2015, Congress enacted the Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, expanding on the Information Quality Act to further ensure agencies use high-quality information.

Still, disputes continue to arise over whether regulators are basing their decisions on the best quality information available. Every year, courts strike down agency rules that do not rely on adequate information. Every year, agency guidance that does not rely on the best information forces regulated parties down pathways that do not make sense.

The Information Quality Assurance Act takes several major but straightforward steps to solve that problem. For the first time, it requires that the information on which agencies rest their rules and guidance be the best reasonably available information. It also includes several additional terms to make sure agencies are finally held to that standard.

This legislation will improve the quality of agency decisionmaking, improve the acceptability of new rules and guidance, and avoid the need for many disputes over agencies' use of information to go to court.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I thank Representative McCLAIN and Representative PORTER for their work on this important bipartisan legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Comment Integrity and Management Act.

Technological advances have expanded access to Federal agencies' online rulemaking dockets and have made it easier for the public to comment on proposed rules. That is a very

good thing from the standpoint of transparency, accountability, and deliberation.

At the same time, in some recent high-profile rulemakings, agencies have received an extraordinarily high volume of completely duplicative comments, which has created some challenges for agencies in processing them and managing their online rulemaking dockets.

I am sure Members are familiar with receiving a standardized message hundreds or even thousands of times from constituents or people across the country.

This bill is designed to help agencies manage such mass comments and computer-generated comments submitted in response to proposed rules. It is not intended in any way to discourage mass comments, which are indeed a vital part of the regulatory process. The bill would simply allow agencies to post a representative sample of mass comments. If they choose to do that, they would also be required to post the number—hold that thought, if you would, Mr. Speaker. I was describing the next bill. Forgive me. We got our papers confused here. Keep that in mind. I like that one, too.

The Information Quality Assurance Act is bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives PORTER and MCCLAIN. I commend them for their work on it.

It would require the Director of OMB to update guidance issued under the Information Quality Act. That guidance is more than 20 years old, and much work has been done by Congress and the executive branch on these issues in the interim. The Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, the DATA Act, and the OPEN Government Act are just a few new laws requiring updated guidance.

Updated guidance would enable agencies to better ensure the quality of information and evidence used in promulgating regulations. The new guidance would ensure that the best reasonably available scientific, demographic, economic, financial, and statistical information is relied on during the regulatory process.

The bill also continues the practices of the Information Quality Act that allow for public input on the information submitted and mechanisms for OMB to report any complaints to Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the majority for working closely with us and the administration in crafting this bill. The result is strong, and I fully support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for making that mistake so that when I make it here in a few bills, it will be easier for me.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MCCLAIN).

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be the sponsor of H.R. 7219, the Information Quality Assurance

Act. I also thank Representative KATIE PORTER for partnering with me on this important piece of legislation.

From my time in business, I can tell you that American employers and workers cannot afford for the Federal Government to impose new regulations and guidance on them that are misinformed, misconceived, and, quite frankly, backed by bad data.

Regulations like that only harm the American people. They needlessly drain employers' resources, kill jobs, and cede economic victory to America's other competitors, like China.

The same can be said of ill-informed and ill-conceived agency guidance. When an agency's guidance rests on flawed information, it risks sending regulated parties and their resources down rabbit holes just to avoid the threat of misguided agency enforcement actions.

One of the most important ways we can make sure the Federal Government does not issue ill-informed regulations and guidance is also, quite frankly, one of the simplest. It is to require that Federal regulators base new regulations and guidance on the best reasonably available information.

My Information Quality Assurance Act does just that. It requires three simple things.

First and foremost, it requires agencies to use the best data possible in drafting regulations. This includes data on the impacts the regulation will have on the American people.

Second, it requires the agency to make public, in a timely fashion, any model, methodology, or source of scientific, technical, demographic, economic, or statistical information which it intends to utilize in its rulemaking.

Third, it makes sure the public has a chance to question whether that information is the best that is reasonably available.

With these three simple common-sense reforms, we can make sure the Federal regulatory system avoids a mountain of mistakes that would unfairly burden the American people. That is what our job in Congress truly is: making the government more efficient so that we can help the most people.

By making these three simple changes to how agencies utilize data, we can achieve that simple goal and make life better for people in this country.

It is clear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle agree. This bill passed through the Oversight Committee—be careful to listen for it—with unanimous bipartisan support. That is the kind of thing this country needs right now.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to lead this bipartisan bill to improve the way our government works for generations to come, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Despite the fact that I didn't know we were on this bill originally, we are in very strong and unanimous support on our side of the aisle for this, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill to ensure that agencies rely on the best reasonably available information to create their regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. LATURNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7219, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

COMMENT INTEGRITY AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2024

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7528) to amend section 206 of the E-Government Act of 2002 to improve the integrity and management of mass comments and computer-generated comments in the regulatory review process, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7528

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 “Comment Integrity and Management Act of 2024”.

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to help Federal agencies manage mass and computer-generated comments in the Federal regulatory process. This should in no way be understood to discourage mass comments, which are a vital part of the regulatory process.

SEC. 3. IMPROVING INTEGRITY AND MANAGEMENT OF MASS COMMENTS AND COMPUTER-GENERATED COMMENTS IN THE REGULATORY REVIEW PROCESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 206 of the E-Government Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-347; 44 U.S.C. 3501 note) is amended by—

(1) redesignating subsection (e) as subsection (f); and

(2) inserting after subsection (d) the following:

“(e) INFORMATION INTEGRITY.—

“(1) VERIFICATION OF ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS.—With respect to each comment accepted by electronic means under subsection (c), in accordance with the guidance established by Director in paragraph (3), the head of an agency shall verify, to the greatest extent possible, at the time the comment is submitted, whether the comment has been submitted by a human being.

“(2) IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF MASS COMMENTS.—