

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.—

“(A) IDENTIFICATION OF MASS COMMENTS.—With respect to each comment accepted by electronic means under subsection (c) by the head of an agency, the head of the agency shall—

“(i) to the extent practicable, reasonably determine whether such comment is a mass comment; and

“(ii) in the case that the agency has made a reasonable determination that the comment is a mass comment, indicate on any publicly available copy of the comment, or comment variations, (through a label or indicator, and in a machine and human readable format) that the comment is part of a mass comment submission; and

“(B) HANDLING OF MASS COMMENTS.—Notwithstanding subsection (d)(2)(A), instead of making available through the electronic docket of the agency each comment identified as a mass comment under paragraph (2), the head of an agency may—

“(i) make available through such docket only a single representative sample of each such mass comment; or

“(ii) in the case where mass comments take the form of variations on certain standardized but not identical language the agency make available through such docket a single copy of one of the variations of the mass comment.

“(C) NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS.—In case in which the head of an agency makes available through such docket a single representative sample or a single copy of one of the variations of a mass comment under subparagraph (B), the head of the agency shall indicate (through a label or indicator, and in a machine and human readable format), on the sample or copy made available, the number of submissions that were determined to be identical, or substantively identical to the sample or copy made available on such docket.

“(3) OMB GUIDANCE.—

“(A) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 240 days after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Director, in consultation with the Administrator of General Services, shall issue guidance to the heads of each agency on the implementation of the requirements of this subsection.

“(B) CONTENTS OF GUIDANCE.—The guidance issued pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall include recommendations for agencies on how to best manage comments accepted by electronic means, including recommendations on how to do the following:

“(i) Use technology tools and procedures that verify, to the greatest extent possible, whether a comment is being submitted by a human being.

“(ii) Identify mass comments, including how to leverage software tools to identify whether a comment is a mass comment.

“(iii) Indicate (through a label or indicator, and in a machine- and human-readable format), that a comment is a mass comment.

“(iv) Use new technology to offer new opportunities for public participation in the rulemaking process.

“(C) UPDATES.—The Director, in consultation with the Administrator of General Services, may update the guidance issued pursuant to subparagraph (A), as determined necessary by the Director.

“(4) POLICIES CONCERNING POSTING AND CONSIDERATION OF COMPUTER-GENERATED COMMENTS AND MASS COMMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the head of each agency shall establish a policy with respect to the posting and consideration of computer-generated comments and mass-comments during the rulemaking process of the agency that is consistent with—

“(i) the requirements of paragraph (2); and

“(ii) the guidance issued under paragraph (3).

“(B) AVAILABILITY OF POLICY.—Not later than 60 days after the date on which the head of an agency establishes a policy pursuant to subparagraph (A), the head of the agency shall, to the extent practicable, post the policy on the website through which an agency makes comments available pursuant to subsection (d)(2)(A).

“(C) UPDATE TO POLICY.—The policy established pursuant to subparagraph (A)—

“(i) shall be updated as necessary to make such guidance consistent with any updates to the guidance issued under paragraph (3); and

“(ii) may be updated by the head of the agency, in consultation with the Director, as the head of the agency determines appropriate.

“(5) EXCEPTION TO TIME LIMITATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—The requirement described under subsection (f) shall not apply to this subsection.

“(6) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) COMMENT.—The term ‘comment’ means a submission under section 553(c) of title 5, United States Code.

“(B) COMPUTER-GENERATED COMMENT.—The term ‘computer-generated comment’ means a comment the substance of which is primarily generated by computer software, including through the use of artificial intelligence, rather than by a human being.

“(C) MASS COMMENT.—The term ‘mass comment’ means a comment submitted as part of an organized submission of a large volume of identical, or substantively identical, comments submitted by different signatories or entities.”

(b) UPDATE TO WEBSITES, INFORMATION SYSTEMS OF AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each agency subject to the requirements of section 206(e) of the E-Government Act, as added by subsection (a), shall update any website of the agency, and any information system of the agency, as necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of such section.

(2) REGULATIONS.GOV.—The Administrator of General Services, acting through the eRulemaking Program Management Office, shall update Regulations.gov as necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of section 206(e) of the E-Government Act, as added by subsection (a).

(3) ERULEMAKING SYSTEM.—The Administrator of General Services shall update the shared eRulemaking system on behalf of participating agencies.

(c) GAO REPORT ON COMPUTER-GENERATED COMMENTS.—

(1) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the identification of computer-generated comments under section 206(e) of the E-Government Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-347; 44 U.S.C. 3501 note), that includes the following:

(A) Recommendations on how to identify if a submission under that section is a computer-generated comment.

(B) Any effect that computer-generated comments have on the rulemaking process.

(C) The extent to which the public uses computer-generated comments to participate in the rulemaking process at the time the report is submitted.

(D) How prevalent computer-generated comments are at the time the report is submitted.

(E) How prevalent the Comptroller General anticipates computer-generated comments will be 5 years after the date on which the report is submitted.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, may be construed as affecting the consideration of a mass comment by the head of an agency during the rulemaking process.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COMMENT.—The term ‘comment’ means a submission under section 553(c) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) COMPUTER-GENERATED COMMENTS.—The term ‘computer-generated comment’ means a comment the substance of which is primarily generated by computer software, including through the use of artificial intelligence, rather than by a human being.

(3) DIRECTOR.—The term ‘Director’ means the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

(4) MASS COMMENT.—The term ‘mass comment’ means a comment submitted as part of an organized submission of a large volume of identical, or substantively identical, comments submitted by different signatories or entities.

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.

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.

Every American deserves the opportunity to participate in our political system, which includes sharing their views on agency rulemaking.

Agencies are required to provide an opportunity to participate in rulemaking by submitting written views or data on draft rules.

Recent advances have expanded the ability for the public to comment on proposed rules electronically. However, agencies may struggle to manage computer-generated or mass comments.

H.R. 7528, the Comment Integrity and Management Act, provides additional support to agencies navigating these new challenges by allowing them the flexibility necessary to manage electronic comments.

The bill requires agencies to verify that any comment submitted electronically has been submitted by an actual human. The bill also provides agencies with additional authorities to assist in processing and analyzing mass comments submitted electronically.

It requires agencies to identify, to the extent practicable, if the comment is a mass comment and indicate this identification on any publicly available copy of the comment.

This bill also requires agencies to establish and make public any policies

they have regarding how they will handle computer-generated and mass comments in the rulemaking process.

Further, this legislation requires the Office of Management and Budget to issue implementing guidance to agencies and requires the Government Accountability Office to submit a report to Congress.

It is time that our Federal agencies adapt their processes to accommodate the latest technologies.

I thank Representative CLAY HIGGINS for his idea and work in developing this forward-thinking legislation.

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

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

I rise in support of the Comment Integrity and Management Act again, as I was saying. I was very eager to support my friend Mr. HIGGINS' legislation here.

The basic issue is that it has gotten easier for people to post comments online in a rulemaking. That is a really good thing because it means that the process of implementing regulations is more accessible, more transparent, more open, and more participatory, but a number of the agencies have found, I think, what Members of Congress have found. Sometimes you get the same paragraph 100 times, 1,000 times, or 3,000 times.

This bill would simply allow agencies to post a representative sample of mass comments like this. If they choose to do that, they still are required to post the number of such comments received so that the volume of public sentiment is still fairly and effectively registered.

The bill would also require agencies, within 1 year, to establish policies for handling computer-generated comments, which is a growing concern to manage with the recent remarkable advances in artificial intelligence.

I am eager to hear from Mr. HIGGINS because I view his legislation as one that supports the administrative rulemaking process, which is so much under attack these days. There are people who say that we shouldn't have rules and regulations. Of course, the way our system works is that, in Congress, we pass laws like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, but we don't get into all the fine details. That is left to the executive branch to do a rulemaking. That, too, is an open process where people can register their concerns and send comments in.

We want to make sure that that process continues to operate effectively and is not overwhelmed and overburdened by AI and computer-duplicated comments.

□ 1630

So I thank Mr. HIGGINS, and I thank Chairman COMER and his staff for working with our side to address some of the concerns we had with the original language.

I understand the administration and some outside groups have also reg-

istered some concerns about the legislation that have been addressed. We have worked with them and our majority counterparts to incorporate their feedback into this revised version of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the bill at this time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. HIGGINS).

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kansas for yielding. I appreciate the commentary of my friend and colleague, the ranking member of the Oversight and Accountability Committee, Representative RASKIN.

It may interest you to know, Mr. Speaker, that Representative RASKIN and I have worked in the spirit of mutual respect and camaraderie for 8 years now. We have enjoyed many vigorous debates in this body, and I find it encouraging that he has risen enthusiastically now twice in support of my bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7528, the Comment Integrity and Management Act. This bill is essential in the digital age where our constituents engage with us more and more through electronic means. It seeks to safeguard citizens' First Amendment right to participate in the Federal rulemaking process.

This participation includes the invaluable process of submitting public comments on proposed Federal rules and regulations, comments that help shape the very fabric of our government.

With the advent of digital technology and the rise of artificial intelligence being of increasing import, the channels for such participation have expanded providing broader access but also introducing new challenges. These challenges include computer-generated comments which can obscure genuine public input and hinder our agencies' ability to gauge public sentiment effectively.

The cornerstone of this bill is its commitment to ensuring that every comment submitted by electronic means comes from a real person, not an automated program. By requiring human verification, we are taking a significant step towards preserving the authenticity of public input.

Furthermore, the Comment Integrity and Management Act equips our agencies with the flexibility and tools necessary to efficiently manage the comments they receive. This includes the authority to identify and process computer-generated and mass comments, ensuring that they are handled transparently and effectively.

Additionally, the legislation directs the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance on best practices for managing electronic comments and mandates a report for the United States Government Accountability Office on the prevalence and impact of computer-generated comments.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to recognize the importance of adapting our processes to the realities of the 21st century. It is imperative that we ensure every American is heard and that genuine public input is not drowned out by the noise of automation.

This bill represents a good government approach to embracing technological advancements while safeguarding the principles of public participation and transparency in the rulemaking process.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to salute the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana for making the administrative rulemaking process up-to-date, rapid, transparent, and effective for all of us so we can keep it going.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. In closing, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7528 helps ensure every American is heard and not drowned out by an influx of computer-generated comments.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this necessary legislation, and 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. 7528, 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.

MAIL TRAFFIC DEATHS REPORTING ACT OF 2024

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7527), to direct the United States Postal Service to issue regulations requiring Postal Service employees and contractors to report to the Postal Service traffic crashes involving vehicles carrying mail that result in injury or death, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7527

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 "Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS ON TRAFFIC CRASH DEATHS AND INJURIES INVOLVING VEHICLES TRANSPORTING MAIL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Postmaster General of the Postal Service shall issue regulations to require the collection, tracking, and public reporting of information related to deaths and injuries resulting from traffic crashes involving vehicles transporting mail. Such regulations shall establish appropriate mechanisms to monitor