

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1608

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency of Federal advisory committees, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2019

Mr. CLAY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Reform, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, and the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency of Federal advisory committees, and for other purposes.

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. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the  
5 “Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments of 2019”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for  
7 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Ensuring independent advice and expertise.

- Sec. 3. Preventing efforts to circumvent the Federal Advisory Committee Act and public disclosure.
- Sec. 4. Increasing transparency of advisory committees.
- Sec. 5. Managing Federal advisory committees.
- Sec. 6. Comptroller General review and reports.
- Sec. 7. Application of Federal Advisory Committee Act to trade advisory committees.
- Sec. 8. Definitions.
- Sec. 9. Technical and conforming amendments.
- Sec. 10. Effective date.
- Sec. 11. No additional funds authorized.

1 **SEC. 2. ENSURING INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND EXPERTISE.**

2 (a) BAR ON POLITICAL LITMUS TESTS.—Section 9  
3 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.)  
4 is amended—

5 (1) in the section heading, by inserting “**MEM-**  
6 **BERSHIP;**” after “**ADVISORY COMMITTEES;**”;

7 (2) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as  
8 subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

9 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-  
10 lowing:

11 “(b) APPOINTMENTS MADE WITHOUT REGARD TO  
12 POLITICAL AFFILIATION OR ACTIVITY.—All appointments  
13 to advisory committees shall be made without regard to  
14 political affiliation or political campaign activity, unless re-  
15 quired by Federal statute.”.

16 (b) MINIMIZING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—Section  
17 9 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.),  
18 as amended by subsection (a) of this section, is further  
19 amended by inserting after subsection (b) (as added by  
20 such subsection (a)) the following:

1       “(c) PUBLIC NOMINATIONS OF COMMITTEE MEM-  
2 BERS.—

3               “(1) Before making an appointment to an advi-  
4 sory committee, the head of an agency shall—

5                       “(A) solicit nominations for potential com-  
6 mittee members;

7                       “(B) if the head of the agency is required  
8 to publish a notice under subsection (a)(2), in-  
9 clude in the notice a solicitation for nomina-  
10 tions of potential committee members; and

11                      “(C) provide in the notice under subpara-  
12 graph (B) a mechanism for interested persons  
13 to comment through a publicly available website  
14 of the agency.

15               “(2) The head of an agency shall consider any  
16 comments submitted in accordance with paragraph  
17 (1)(C) in appointing the members of an advisory  
18 committee.

19               “(3) The head of an agency shall solicit nomi-  
20 nations under paragraph (1) not less frequently than  
21 once every 2 years.

22               “(4) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if a va-  
23 cancy in an advisory committee occurs before the  
24 next scheduled solicitation for nominations under  
25 this subsection, an agency may appoint a member

1 from among individuals that were previously nomi-  
2 nated to be a member of the advisory committee.

3 “(d) DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS.—

4 “(1) An individual appointed to an advisory  
5 committee who is not a full-time or permanent part-  
6 time officer or employee of the Federal Government  
7 shall be designated as—

8 “(A) a special Government employee, if the  
9 individual is providing advice based on the indi-  
10 vidual’s expertise or experience; or

11 “(B) a representative, if the individual is  
12 representing the views of an entity or entities  
13 outside of the Federal Government.

14 “(2) An agency may not designate committee  
15 members as representatives to avoid subjecting them  
16 to Federal ethics rules and requirements.

17 “(3) The designated agency ethics official for  
18 each agency shall review the members of each advi-  
19 sory committee that reports to the agency to deter-  
20 mine whether each member’s designation is appro-  
21 priate, and to redesignate members if appropriate.  
22 The designated agency ethics official shall certify to  
23 the head of the agency that such review has been  
24 made—

1           “(A) following the initial appointment of  
2           members; and

3           “(B) at the time a committee’s charter is  
4           renewed, or, in the case of a committee with an  
5           indefinite charter, every 2 years.

6           “(4) The head of each agency shall inform each  
7           individual who is not a full-time or permanent part-  
8           time officer or employee of the Federal Government  
9           appointed to an advisory committee that reports to  
10          the agency whether the individual is appointed as a  
11          special Government employee or as a representative.  
12          The agency head shall provide each committee mem-  
13          ber with an explanation of the differences between  
14          special Government employees and representatives  
15          and a summary of applicable ethics requirements.  
16          The agency head, acting through the designated  
17          agency ethics official, shall obtain signed and dated  
18          written confirmation from each committee member  
19          that the member received and reviewed the informa-  
20          tion required by this paragraph.

21          “(5) The Director of the Office of Government  
22          Ethics shall provide guidance to agencies on what to  
23          include in the summary of ethics requirements re-  
24          quired by paragraph (4).

1           “(6) The head of each agency shall, to the ex-  
2           tent practicable, develop and implement strategies to  
3           minimize the need for written determinations under  
4           section 208(b)(3) of title 18, United States Code.  
5           Strategies may include such efforts as improving  
6           outreach efforts to potential committee members and  
7           seeking public input on potential committee mem-  
8           bers.

9           “(7) Nothing in this subsection shall be con-  
10          strued to supersede the inapplicability of this Act  
11          with respect to peer review groups appointed under  
12          paragraph (16) of section 402(b) of the Public  
13          Health Service Act, as described in the flush text  
14          following paragraph (25)(B) of such section.”.

15          (c) REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING FACCA.—Section  
16          7(c) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.  
17          App.) is amended by inserting “promulgate regulations  
18          and” after “The Administrator shall”.

19          (d) ENSURING INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND REC-  
20          COMMENDATIONS.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act  
21          (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

22                  (1) in section 8—

23                          (A) in the section heading, by inserting

24                          “**INDEPENDENT      ADVICE      AND      REC-**

1           **COMMENDATIONS;**” after “**RESPONSIBIL-**  
2           **ITIES OF AGENCY HEADS;**”;

3           (B) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-  
4           section (c); and

5           (C) by inserting after subsection (a) the  
6           following:

7           “(b) The head of each agency shall ensure that the  
8           agency does not interfere with the free and independent  
9           participation, expression of views, and deliberation by  
10          committee members. Each advisory committee shall in-  
11          clude a statement describing the process used by the advi-  
12          sory committee in formulating the advice and rec-  
13          ommendations when they are transmitted to the agency.”;  
14          and

15          (2) in section 10—

16                 (A) in the section heading, by inserting “;  
17                 **CHAIR**” after “**ATTENDANCE**”; and

18                 (B) by inserting after subsection (f) the  
19                 following new subsection:

20                 “(g) The chair shall not be an employee of the agency  
21                 to which the advisory committee reports, unless—

22                         “(1) a statute specifically authorizes selection of  
23                         such an employee as the chair; or

24                         “(2) the head of the agency directs an employee  
25                         to serve as the chair.”.

1 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT THE FED-**  
2 **ERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT AND PUB-**  
3 **LIC DISCLOSURE.**

4 (a) SUBCOMMITTEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-  
5 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended by  
6 striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

7 “(a) APPLICATION.—The provisions of this Act or of  
8 any rule, order, or regulation promulgated under this Act  
9 shall apply to each advisory committee, including any sub-  
10 committee or subgroup thereof, except to the extent that  
11 any Act of Congress establishing any such advisory com-  
12 mittee specifically provides otherwise. Any subcommittee  
13 or subgroup that reports to a parent committee estab-  
14 lished under section 9(a) is not required to comply with  
15 section 9(f).”.

16 (b) COMMITTEES CREATED UNDER CONTRACT.—  
17 Section 3(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
18 U.S.C. App.) is amended in the matter following subpara-  
19 graph (C) by adding at the end the following: “An advi-  
20 sory committee is considered to be established by an agen-  
21 cy, agencies, or the President if it is formed, created, or  
22 organized under contract, other transactional authority,  
23 cooperative agreement, grant, or otherwise at the request  
24 or direction of an agency, agencies, or the President.”.

25 (c) ADVISORY COMMITTEES CONTAINING SPECIAL  
26 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-



1 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as amended by  
 2 subsections (a) and (b) of this section, is further amended  
 3 by adding at the end the following new subsection:

4 “(d) SPECIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Com-  
 5 mittee members appointed as special Government employ-  
 6 ees shall not be considered full-time or permanent part-  
 7 time officers or employees of the Federal Government for  
 8 purposes of determining the applicability of this Act under  
 9 section 3(2).”.

10 **SEC. 4. INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF ADVISORY COM-**  
 11 **MITTEES.**

12 (a) INFORMATION REQUIREMENT.—Section 11 of the  
 13 Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is  
 14 amended to read as follows:

15 **“SEC. 11. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each advisory  
 17 committee, the head of the agency to which the advisory  
 18 committee reports shall make publicly available in accord-  
 19 ance with subsection (b) the following information:

20 “(1) The charter of the advisory committee.

21 “(2) A description of the process used to estab-  
 22 lish and appoint the members of the advisory com-  
 23 mittee, including the following:

24 “(A) The process for identifying prospec-  
 25 tive members.

1           “(B) The process of selecting members for  
2 balance of viewpoints or expertise.

3           “(C) The reason each member was ap-  
4 pointed to the committee.

5           “(D) A justification of the need for rep-  
6 resentative members, if any.

7           “(3) A list of all current members, including,  
8 for each member, the following:

9           “(A) The name of any person or entity  
10 that nominated the member.

11           “(B) Whether the member is—

12           “(i) designated as a special Govern-  
13 ment employee;

14           “(ii) a representative; or

15           “(iii) a full-time or permanent part-  
16 time officer or employee of the Federal  
17 Government.

18           “(C) In the case of a representative, the  
19 individuals or entity whose viewpoint the mem-  
20 ber represents.

21           “(4) A list of all members designated as special  
22 Government employees for whom written certifi-  
23 cations were made under section 208(b) of title 18,  
24 United States Code, a copy of each such certifi-  
25 cation, a summary description of the conflict necessi-

1 tating the certification, and the reason for granting  
2 the certification.

3 “(5) Any recusal agreement made by a member  
4 or any recusal known to the agency that occurs dur-  
5 ing the course of a meeting or other work of the  
6 committee.

7 “(6) A summary of the process used by the ad-  
8 visory committee for making decisions.

9 “(7) Detailed minutes of all meetings of the  
10 committee and a description of committee efforts to  
11 make meetings accessible to the public using online  
12 technologies (such as video recordings) or other  
13 techniques (such as audio recordings).

14 “(8) Any written determination by the Presi-  
15 dent or the head of the agency to which the advisory  
16 committee reports, pursuant to section 10(d), to  
17 close a meeting or any portion of a meeting and the  
18 reasons for such determination.

19 “(9) Notices of future meetings of the com-  
20 mittee.

21 “(10) Any additional information considered  
22 relevant by the head of the agency to which the advi-  
23 sory committee reports.

24 “(b) MANNER OF DISCLOSURE.—

1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
2           graph (2), the head of an agency shall make the in-  
3           formation required to be disclosed under subsection  
4           (a) available electronically on a publicly available  
5           website of the agency and to the Administrator at  
6           least 15 calendar days before each meeting of an ad-  
7           visory committee. If the head of the agency deter-  
8           mines that such timing is not practicable for any re-  
9           quired information, such head shall make the infor-  
10          mation available as soon as practicable but no later  
11          than 48 hours before the next meeting of the com-  
12          mittee. An agency may withhold from disclosure any  
13          information that would be exempt from disclosure  
14          under section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

15           “(2) WEBSITE AVAILABILITY.—The head of an  
16          agency shall make available electronically, on a pub-  
17          licly available website of the agency, detailed min-  
18          utes and, to the extent available, a transcript or  
19          audio or video recording of each advisory committee  
20          meeting not later than 45 calendar days after such  
21          meeting.

22           “(3) GRANT REVIEWS.—In the case of grant re-  
23          views, disclosure of information required by sub-  
24          section (a)(3) may be provided in the aggregate  
25          rather than by individual grant.

1       “(c) PROVISION OF INFORMATION BY ADMINIS-  
2 TRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES.—The Administrator of  
3 General Services shall provide, on a publicly available  
4 website of the General Services Administration, electronic  
5 access to the information made available by each agency  
6 under this section.

7       “(d) AVAILABILITY OF MEETING MATERIALS.—

8               “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
9 graph (2) and where prohibited by contractual  
10 agreements entered into prior to the effective date of  
11 the Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments of  
12 2019, agencies and advisory committees shall make  
13 available to any person, at actual cost of duplication,  
14 copies of advisory committee meeting materials.

15               “(2) APPLICABILITY.—Nothing in this sub-  
16 section shall be construed to require the disclosure  
17 of information that is protected from mandatory dis-  
18 closure by statute.”.

19       “(b) CHARTER FILING.—Subsection (f) of section 9 of  
20 the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as  
21 redesignated by section 2(a) of this Act, is amended to  
22 read as follows:

23               “(f) No advisory committee shall meet or take any  
24 action until an advisory committee charter has been filed  
25 with the Administrator, the head of the agency to whom

1 any advisory committee reports, and the standing commit-  
2 tees of the Senate and of the House of Representatives  
3 having legislative jurisdiction of such agency. Such charter  
4 shall contain the following information in the following  
5 order:

6           “(1) The committee’s official designation.

7           “(2) The authority under which the committee  
8 is established.

9           “(3) The committee’s objectives and the scope  
10 of its activity.

11           “(4) A description of the duties for which the  
12 committee is responsible, and, if such duties are not  
13 solely advisory, a specification of the authority for  
14 such functions.

15           “(5) The agency or official to whom the com-  
16 mittee reports.

17           “(6) The agency responsible for providing the  
18 necessary support for the committee.

19           “(7) The responsibilities of the officer or em-  
20 ployee of the Federal Government designated under  
21 section 10(e).

22           “(8) The estimated number and frequency of  
23 committee meetings.

24           “(9) The period of time necessary for the com-  
25 mittee to carry out its purposes.

1           “(10) The committee’s termination date, if less  
2           than 2 years from the date of the committee’s estab-  
3           lishment.

4           “(11) The estimated number of members and a  
5           description of the expertise needed to carry out the  
6           objectives of the committee.

7           “(12) A description of whether the committee  
8           will be composed of full- or part-time Government  
9           employees, special Government employees, represent-  
10          atives, or a combination of categories.

11          “(13) Whether the agency intends to create  
12          subcommittees and if so, the agency official author-  
13          ized to exercise such authority.

14          “(14) The estimated annual operating costs in  
15          dollars and full-time equivalent positions for such  
16          committee.

17          “(15) The recordkeeping requirements of the  
18          committee.

19          “(16) The date the charter is filed.

20          A copy of any such charter shall also be furnished to the  
21          Library of Congress.”.

22          **SEC. 5. MANAGING FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES.**

23          (a) COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT OFFICERS.—Sub-  
24          section (c) of section 8 of the Federal Advisory Committee

1 Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as redesignated by section 2(d) of  
2 this Act, is amended to read as follows:

3 “(c) The head of each agency that has an advisory  
4 committee shall designate an Advisory Committee Man-  
5 agement Officer who shall—

6 “(1) be a senior official who is—

7 “(A) an expert in implementing the re-  
8 quirements of this Act and regulations promul-  
9 gated pursuant to this Act; and

10 “(B) the primary point of contact for the  
11 General Services Administration;

12 “(2) ensure the establishment, management,  
13 and supervision of the advisory committees of the  
14 agency, including establishing procedures, perform-  
15 ance measures, and outcomes for such committees;

16 “(3) ensure the assembly and maintenance of  
17 the reports, records, and other papers (including ad-  
18 visory committee meeting materials) of any such  
19 committee during its existence;

20 “(4) ensure any such committee and cor-  
21 responding agency staff adhere to the provisions of  
22 this Act and any regulations promulgated pursuant  
23 to this Act;



1           “(5) ensure the maintenance of records on each  
2           employee of any such committee and completion of  
3           training required for any such employee;

4           “(6) be responsible for providing the informa-  
5           tion required in section 7(b) of this Act to the Ad-  
6           ministrators; and

7           “(7) carry out, on behalf of that agency, the  
8           provisions of section 552 of title 5, United States  
9           Code, with respect to the reports, records, and other  
10          papers described in paragraph (3).”.

11 **SEC. 6. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEW AND REPORTS.**

12          (a) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United  
13 States shall review compliance by agencies with the Fed-  
14 eral Advisory Committee Act, as amended by this Act, in-  
15 cluding whether agencies are appropriately appointing ad-  
16 visory committee members who are not full-time or perma-  
17 nent part-time officers or employees of the Federal Gov-  
18 ernment as either special Government employees or rep-  
19 resentatives.

20          (b) REPORT.—The Comptroller General shall submit  
21 to the committees described in subsection (c) two reports  
22 on the results of the review, as follows:

23               (1) The first report shall be submitted not later  
24               than 1 year after the date of promulgation of regula-  
25               tions under section 7(c) of the Federal Advisory

1 Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as amended by sec-  
2 tion 2(c).

3 (2) The second report shall be submitted not  
4 later than 5 years after such date of promulgation  
5 of regulations.

6 (c) COMMITTEES.—The committees described in this  
7 subsection are the Committee on Oversight and Reform  
8 of the House of Representatives and the Committee on  
9 Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Sen-  
10 ate.

11 **SEC. 7. APPLICATION OF FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

12 **ACT TO TRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEES.**

13 Section 135(f)(2)(A) of the Trade Act of 1974 (19  
14 U.S.C. 2155(f)(2)(A)) is amended by striking “sub-  
15 sections (a) and (b) of sections 10 and 11 of the Federal  
16 Advisory Committee Act” and inserting “subsections (a)  
17 and (b) of section 10 and subsections (a)(7), (a)(8),  
18 (a)(9), (b)(2), and (d) of section 11 of the Federal Advi-  
19 sory Committee Act”.

20 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

21 Section 3 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
22 U.S.C. App.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
23 lowing new paragraph:

1           “(5) The term ‘special Government employee’  
2           has the meaning given that term in section 202(a)  
3           of title 18, United States Code.”.

4 **SEC. 9. TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**

5           Section 7(d)(1) of the Federal Advisory Committee  
6 Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

7           (1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “the rate  
8           specified for GS–18 of the General Schedule under  
9           section 5332” and inserting “the rate for level IV of  
10          the Executive Schedule under section 5315”; and

11          (2) in subparagraph (C)(i), by striking “handi-  
12          capped individuals (within the meaning of section  
13          501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.  
14          794))” and inserting “individuals with disabilities  
15          (as defined in section 7(20) of the Rehabilitation Act  
16          of 1973)”.

17 **SEC. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

18          This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall  
19 take effect 30 days after the date of the enactment of this  
20 Act.

21 **SEC. 11. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.**

22          No additional funds are authorized to carry out the  
23 requirements of this Act and the amendments made by  
24 this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using  
25 amounts otherwise authorized.

1 **SEC. 12. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

2       The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of  
3 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,  
4 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement  
5 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this  
6 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record  
7 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-  
8 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the  
9 vote on passage.

○