

## **Amendment \_\_\_\_ —To require all reports authorized in this bill be publicized and accessible to the public once completed**

This amendment requires that all reports required to be submitted by a federal agency within this act be posted on the public Website of that agency for all Americans and Members of Congress to see. The only exception to this is for reports that contain classified or proprietary information.

This amendment was unanimously adopted as an amendment to the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 (H.R. 3183). By passing this amendment to the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development bill, Congress will increase transparency of the both the legislative and administrative process and give Americans the opportunity to be more involved in holding their elected officials accountable.

### **Each Appropriation Bill Requires Dozens of Reports**

Typically, in each appropriations bill, dozens of studies, reports, and reviews are funded for a variety of reasons.

Many of these reports are instances of Congress exercising their Constitutional responsibility of oversight to ensure that certain agencies or federal programs are operating effectively and efficiently.

Other reports are to ascertain how federal funding should be appropriated in the future or to justify the creation of a new federal program.

The Transportation-HUD appropriations bill requires numerous reports, including:

- A report on how the Federal Aviation Administration is developing a workforce to implement critical airplane guidance technology;
- A report on savings Amtrak achieves;
- A report which describes how the investments made with funding provided in the bill will contribute to furthering the national rail plan

- Quarterly reports on the timeliness of Amtrak trains.

### **Reports Authorized in This Bill Often Are Exclusively for Senators on the Appropriations Committee**

Unfortunately, because Members of the Appropriations committees in the House and the Senate write these bills, these reports are often only written for appropriators.

For instance, section 154 in this bill says:

“The Federal Railroad Administrator shall submit a quarterly report on April 1, 2009, and quarterly reports thereafter, to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations detailing the Administrator’s efforts at improving the on-time performance of Amtrak intercity rail service operating on non-Amtrak owned property.”

This means that the vast majority of Congress (88 percent of the House of Representatives and 70 percent of the Senate) cannot review these reports before making decisions on what federal programs they would like to prioritize or where federal legislation is necessary.

Additionally, the American public is effectively barred from viewing these documents and contributing their expertise and oversight capabilities.

### **Publicizing Reports Will Allow Americans to See How Their Money is Being Spent**

By requiring that the federal agencies producing the reports funded in this bill publicize them on their public Website, all Americans with access to the internet will be able to read and evaluate these reports.

In today’s information age, observations made by bloggers, government accountability group, students, and others can help inform the public of needs or problems within our government and society.

Empowering millions of Americans to check up on their government by viewing these reports online, will also further encourage agencies to be accountable to Congress and the people of the United States of America.

**Publicizing Reports Will Allow All Members of Congress to Conduct Better Oversight of Agencies**

By requiring that the federal agencies producing the reports funded in this bill publicize them on their public Website, all Members of Congress and their staff will be ensured of easy access to these reports.

Evaluating and reading these reports may prompt a Congressional hearing, federal legislation, or even a termination of a federal program or policy.

These reports may also be helpful in setting fiscal priorities by exposing Members of Congress to performance results of programs and studies on issues within federal agencies.