Amendment: Requirement for Legislation to be Online for 72-Hours Before a Vote in Congress

This amendment would require all legislation in the full House of Representatives and Senate to be online for 72 hours prior to a vote.

Any bill that is not online for 72 hours would be subject to a point of order.

All points of order can be waived by a two-thirds vote of either house.

Transparency in the legislative process will prevent abuse.

The STOCK Act is trying to solve the problems caused by members who abuse their office.

One way this happens in a different way is when the public is kept in the dark about legislation until it's too late.

For many pieces of legislation, there is simply not enough time to understand everything in it.

Congress approves bills hundreds of pages in length and costing hundreds of billions of dollars or more without providing the public—or even members of Congress—time to read or understand the cost or impact of the bills.

This process can be abused by the small group of members and staff by including provisions in the bill that personally benefit them or their causes.

The public is tired of seeing the process abused.

Too often the public is surprised to learn that Congress said one thing about a bill, only to find out another.

This breeds cynicism and distrust between the public and Congress – the very problem the STOCK Act would like to address.

In February 2009, for example, Congress passed the stimulus bill less than 24 hours after the final 785 page conference agreement was provided to members of Congress and the public.

At that time, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated the bill would cost $787 billion.

CBO later reported the bill's price had increased to $862 billion, $75 billion more than originally projected.

Again, during the health care debate in December 2009, Senators had approximately 30 hours to read and comprehend the 383 page manager's amendment to the health care bill.

Buried in this bill were billions of dollars of pork projects used to secure enough votes for the bill's passage, such as the now notorious "Louisiana Purchase," Nebraska's "Cornhusker Kickback," and the "Gator-aid" for Florida.

Perhaps the most outrageous abuse was the clever way Congress used this rushed process to exempt itself from the rules everyone else has to follow.

Hidden in the fine print, congressional staff exempted themselves from being forced into the new federal health care exchanges created by the bill.

To ensure the proper functioning of our government, transparency is vital.

Legislators should not rush the passage of major pieces of legislation based often on artificial political deadlines and without sufficient time to read the bill's text or understand its impact and cost.

Transparency measures like this have gained bipartisan support.

The White House website committed to its own version, saying: "we will publish all non-emergency legislation to the website for five days, and allow the public to review and comment before the President signs it."

Eight Senate Democrats signed a letter calling for 72 hour to review the health care legislation at the time.

The letter stated:

> "The legislative text and complete budget scores from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) of the health care legislation considered on the Senate floor should be made available on a website the public can access for **at least 72 hours prior to the first vote to proceed to the legislation**. Likewise, the legislative text and complete CBO scores of the health care legislation as amended should be made available to the public for 72 hours prior to the vote on final passage of the bill in the Senate."

Despite the calls for and promises of transparency, Washington continues to conduct business as usual in secret, to disastrous results.

It is imperative all bills and their cost be available to the public online at least 72 hours before being voted upon by Congress.

The American people and members of Congress need and deserve time to read a bill, understand it, and digest its content before Congress is expected to vote on it.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of U.S. voters surveyed believe Congress should post legislation online for everyone to read before voting on it, according to a Rasmussen poll.