

Amendment 1737: Requires all legislation to be reviewed before it is considered by the Senate to determine whether new duplicative and overlapping programs are being created.

This bipartisan amendment would require for every bill considered by the Senate:

- 1) an analysis by the Congressional Research Service to determine if the bill creates any new federal program, office, or initiative that would duplicate or overlap any existing federal program, office, or initiative with similar mission, purpose, goals, or activities along with a listing of all of the overlapping or duplicative federal program or programs, office or offices, or initiative or initiatives; and
- 2) an explanation provided by the committee as to why the creation of each new program, office, or initiative is necessary if a similar program or programs, office or offices, or initiative or initiatives already exist.

Since release of GAO's first report on duplication, the Senate has twice rejected this bipartisan amendment aimed at preventing future duplication.

First, on June 29, 2011, the Senate nearly rejected an identical amendment offered to S. Res. 116. The vote result was 63 - 34 (Yea -Nay), however, the measure failed to achieve the two-thirds vote threshold needed to pass.

On February 2, 2012, the Senate voted on the measure a second time. The vote result was 60-39 (Yea-Nay) but it again failed to garner the votes necessary for passage.

IDENTIFIES AND HELPS PREVENT UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION BEFORE IT IS CREATED

Congress creates hundreds of new programs every year, adding to the thousands that already exist. Every time Congress makes a new program that duplicates an existing program, taxpayers must pay for both programs. It also highlights Congress' failure to conduct oversight. If Congress is unaware of existing programs that are not meeting a need, that

would indicate those programs are not being held accountable to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

In March 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report examining 34 missions of the federal government identifying hundreds of duplicative and overlapping programs costing approximately \$217 billion a year. GAO stated “reducing or eliminating duplication, overlap, or fragmentation could potentially save billions of taxpayer dollars annually and help agencies provide more efficient and effective services.”

GAO found there are 47 separate job training programs, 88 economic development programs, 82 teacher quality programs, and 56 financial literacy programs.

In the next month, GAO plans to release another installment detailing more wasteful duplication as well as an a report finding Congress did little, if anything, to address the hundreds of billions of dollars in duplication identified last year.

As a candidate for president in 2008, Barack Obama pledged to “eliminate wasteful redundancy.” Obama stated “too often, federal departments take on functions or services that are already being done or could be done elsewhere within the federal government more effectively. The result is unnecessary redundancy.”

This amendment will ensure Congress and the President are fully aware of other existing programs with similar goals before new similar programs are created.

GAO’S 2012 REPORT ON DUPLICATION

With the release GAO’s 2012 report, combined with last year’s recommendations, Congress and the administration have been given extensive details in 132 areas of government duplication and opportunities for significant cost savings, with dozens recommendations for how to address the duplication and find these savings.

The report also provides a very clear and concise listing of dozens of areas ripe for reform and in need of collaboration from members on both sides of the aisle, to find solutions to address these issues.

Last year both Republicans and Democrats said GAO's first report on duplication would serve as a roadmap for extensive federal savings, to help put us on a path of fiscal solvency and begin reducing our deficit. These pledges were quickly set aside, and exchanged for partisan bickering and a refusal to find even the simplest areas of commonality.

Congress is looking into a future of trillion dollar deficits and a national debt quickly headed toward \$20 trillion. Our nation is not on the verge of bankruptcy—it is already bankrupt. We have maxed out our own credit cards and are now living off our children's credit cards, while funding a government with so many duplicative programs they cannot even all be written down in a more than 420 page report.

GAO's work presents Washington with literally hundreds of options for areas in which we could make a decision now to start finding savings, potentially hundreds of billions of dollars.

PROVIDES GREATER TRANSPARENCY FOR LAWMAKERS AND TAXPAYERS REGARDING THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATION

This transparency will ensure greater accountability in the legislative process.

Currently, CRS already provides an analysis of most legislation and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) already scores bills for costs.

These analyses, however, do not examine duplication. GAO's two duplication reports identify billions in wasteful duplication.

The amendment will ensure taxpayers are provided an explanation from Congress as to why another new program that duplicates one or more existing programs may be needed before a bill is considered. Lawmakers can then make better informed decisions as to whether or not creation of duplication is justified.

Because CRS has long provided lawmakers with independent summaries of bills, the agency is the most appropriate and obvious agency to conduct these analyses.

EXEMPTS LEGISLATION THAT ADDRESSED EMERGENCIES

Bills designated as “emergency” because they address immediate, unforeseen, and urgent matters would be exempted from the duplication analysis. This will ensure Congress can continue to swiftly address emergencies.