

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4582

To provide Internet access to congressional documents, including certain Congressional Research Service publications, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 6, 2000

Mr. DEMINT (for himself, Mr. CANADY of Florida, Mrs. CHENOWETH-HAGE, Mr. COBURN, Mr. HILL of Montana, Mr. METCALF, Mr. SALMON, Mr. SANFORD, Mr. TANCREDO, and Mr. TOOMEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To provide Internet access to congressional documents, including certain Congressional Research Service publications, 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.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Citizen Legislature
5 Empowerment through Access to Resources (CLEAR)
6 Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) an informed electorate is the most precious
2 asset of any democracy;

3 (2) it is often burdensome, difficult, and time-
4 consuming for citizens to obtain timely access to
5 records of the Congress;

6 (3) it is also challenging for Members and com-
7 mittees of Congress to provide timely access to cur-
8 rent records of Congress through websites main-
9 tained by Congress;

10 (4) congressional documents which are placed
11 in the Congressional Record are made available to
12 the public electronically by the Superintendent of
13 Documents under the direction of the Public Print-
14 er;

15 (5) other congressional documents are also
16 made available electronically on websites maintained
17 by Members and committees of Congress;

18 (6) a wide range of records of Congress remain
19 inaccessible to the public;

20 (7) the public should have easy and timely ac-
21 cess, including electronic access, to records of the
22 Congress; and

23 (8) Congress should use new technologies to en-
24 hance public access to records and other important
25 information of the Congress.

1 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

2 (1) to foster democracy by ensuring public ac-
3 cess to records of Congress;

4 (2) to improve public access to records of Con-
5 gress;

6 (3) to enhance the electronic public access, in-
7 cluding access through the Internet, to records of
8 Congress; and

9 (4) to further enhance the education of citizens
10 and encourage their participation in the government
11 of their country.

12 **SEC. 3. AVAILABILITY OF CERTAIN CRS INFORMATION.**

13 (a) AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Con-
15 gressional Research Service shall make available
16 through a centralized electronic database, for the
17 purpose of Members and committees providing ac-
18 cess and retrieval by the public as described in sec-
19 tion 4, all information described in paragraph (2)
20 which is available through the Congressional Re-
21 search Service website.

22 (2) INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE.—
23 The information to be made available under para-
24 graph (1) is as follows:

1 (A) Congressional Research Service Issue
2 Briefs.

3 (B) Congressional Research Service Re-
4 ports which are available to Members of Con-
5 gress through the Congressional Research Serv-
6 ice website.

7 (C) Congressional Research Service Au-
8 thorization of Appropriations Products and Ap-
9 propriations Products.

10 (3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this
11 subsection shall be construed to require the Director
12 to make available under this subsection any docu-
13 ment or other information which is prepared by the
14 Congressional Research Service solely in response to
15 a research request of an individual, office, or com-
16 mittee for the exclusive use of such individual, office,
17 or committee.

18 (b) LIMITATIONS.—

19 (1) CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.—Subsection
20 (a) does not apply to any information which is con-
21 fidential, as determined by—

22 (A) the Director; or

23 (B) the head of the Federal department or
24 agency which provided the information to the
25 Congressional Research Service.

1 (2) REDACTION AND REVISION.—In carrying
2 out this section, the Director of the Congressional
3 Research Service may—

4 (A) remove from the information required
5 to be made available under subsection (a) the
6 name and phone number of, and any other in-
7 formation regarding, an employee of the Con-
8 gressional Research Service;

9 (B) remove from the information required
10 to be made available under subsection (a) any
11 material for which the Director determines that
12 making it available under subsection (a) may
13 infringe the copyright of a work protected
14 under title 17, United States Code; and

15 (C) make any changes in the information
16 required to be made available under subsection
17 (a) that the Director determines necessary to
18 ensure that the information is accurate and
19 current.

20 (c) TIME.—The Director of the Congressional Re-
21 search Service shall make available all information re-
22 quired under this section in a timely and prompt manner.

23 (d) MANNER.—The Director of the Congressional Re-
24 search Service shall make information required to be made
25 available under this section in a manner which—

1 (1) is practical and reasonable; and

2 (2) does not permit the submission of comments
3 from the public.

4 **SEC. 4. METHOD OF ACCESS.**

5 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Public access to information made
6 available under this Act shall be provided through the
7 websites maintained by Members and committees of the
8 House of Representatives and the Senate. The Director
9 of the Congressional Research Service shall work with the
10 Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representa-
11 tives and the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate to carry
12 out this subsection.

13 (b) **EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRS REPORTS**
14 **ONLINE.**—The Director of the Congressional Research
15 Service is responsible for maintaining and updating the
16 information made available on the Internet under section
17 3, and shall have sole discretion to edit that information
18 under this Act.

19 (c) **FURTHER APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED.**—Notwith-
20 standing any other provision of law, the Director of the
21 Congressional Research Service shall make available the
22 information required to be made available under section
23 3 to Members and committees of Congress for the pur-
24 poses described in this Act without the prior approval of
25 the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate,

1 the Committee on House Administration of the House of
2 Representatives, or the Joint Committee on Printing.

3 **SEC. 5. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

4 Nothing in this Act may be construed—

5 (1) to modify the role of the Congressional Re-
6 search Service as an institution whose mission is to
7 provide service to Congress and not to persons out-
8 side of Congress; or

9 (2) to infringe on the constitutional protections
10 provided for the work product of the Congressional
11 Research Service which enable the Service to fulfill
12 its mission of serving Congress.

13 **SEC. 6. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING COMMITTEE MA-**
14 **TERIALS.**

15 It is the sense of Congress that each standing and
16 special committee of the House of Representatives and
17 Senate and each joint committee of Congress, in accord-
18 ance with such rules as the committee may adopt, should
19 provide access to the public through the Internet to pub-
20 licly available committee information, documents, and pro-
21 ceedings, including bills, reports, and transcripts of com-
22 mittee meetings which are open to the public.

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