

110TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 5687

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 25, 2008

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs

AN ACT

To amend the Federal Advisory Committee Act to increase the transparency and accountability 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments of 2008”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
5 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. Comptroller General review and reports.

Sec. 6. Definitions.

Sec. 7. Effective date.

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

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

10 (1) in the section heading by inserting “MEM-
11 BERSHIP;” after “ADVISORY COMMITTEES;”;

12 (2) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as
13 subsections (d) and (e), respectively; and

14 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
15 lowing:

16 “(b) APPOINTMENTS MADE WITHOUT REGARD TO
17 POLITICAL AFFILIATION OR ACTIVITY.—All appointments
18 to advisory committees shall be made without regard to
19 political affiliation or political activity, unless required by
20 Federal statute.”.

21 (b) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE.—Section
22 9 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.)

1 is further amended by inserting after subsection (b) (as
2 added by subsection (a)) the following:

3 “(c) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE.—

4 “(1)(A) The head of each agency shall ensure
5 that no individual appointed to serve on an advisory
6 committee that reports to the agency has a conflict
7 of interest that is relevant to the functions to be per-
8 formed by the advisory committee, unless the head
9 of the agency determines that the need for the indi-
10 vidual’s services outweighs the potential impacts of
11 the conflict of interest.

12 “(B) If the head of the agency makes such a
13 determination with respect to an individual, nothing
14 in this subsection is intended to preclude the head
15 of the agency from requiring the recusal of the indi-
16 vidual from particular aspects of the committee’s
17 work.

18 “(C) In the case of an individual appointed as
19 a representative, the fact that an individual is asso-
20 ciated with the entity whose views are being rep-
21 resented by the individual shall not itself be consid-
22 ered a conflict of interest by the agency.

23 “(2) The head of each agency shall require—

24 “(A) that each individual the agency ap-
25 points or intends to appoint to serve on an ad-

1 visory committee as a representative inform the
2 agency official responsible for appointing the in-
3 dividual in writing of any actual or potential
4 conflict of interest—

5 “(i) that exists before appointment or
6 that arises while the individual is serving
7 on the Committee; and

8 “(ii) that is relevant to the functions
9 to be performed; and

10 “(B) that, for an individual appointed to
11 serve on an advisory committee, the conflict is
12 publicly disclosed as described in section 11.

13 “(3) Nothing in this subsection is intended to
14 alter any requirement or obligation for a special
15 Government employee under the Ethics in Govern-
16 ment Act (5 U.S.C. App.) or other applicable ethics
17 law, including any requirement to file a financial dis-
18 closure report. The head of each agency shall require
19 that each individual the agency appoints as a special
20 Government employee inform the agency in writing
21 of any conflict that exists before appointment or
22 that arises while the individual is serving on the
23 committee to the extent any financial disclosure re-
24 quired by the Ethics in Government Act (5 U.S.C.
25 app.) or other applicable law would not uncover the

1 conflict of interest as such term is defined in regula-
2 tions promulgated by the Office of Government Eth-
3 ics to carry out this subsection.

4 “(4) The head of each agency shall ensure that
5 each report of an advisory committee that reports to
6 the agency is the result of the advisory committee’s
7 judgment, independent from the agency. Each advi-
8 sory committee shall include in each report of the
9 committee a statement describing the process used
10 by the advisory committee in formulating the rec-
11 ommendations or conclusions contained in the re-
12 port.”.

13 (c) REGULATIONS.—

14 (1) REGULATIONS RELATING TO CONFLICTS OF
15 INTEREST.—Not later than 180 days after the date
16 of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Of-
17 fice of Government Ethics, in consultation with the
18 Administrator of General Services, shall promul-
19 gate—

20 (A) regulations defining the term “conflict
21 of interest”;

22 (B) regulations identifying the method by
23 which individuals must disclose conflicts and
24 the period of time for which a representative or
25 special Government employee, or a candidate

1 for appointment as a representative or special
2 Government employee, shall look back in time
3 to determine whether an interest is considered
4 a conflict for the purpose of the notification re-
5 quirement in subsection (c) of section 9 of the
6 Federal Advisory Committee Act, as added by
7 this section; and

8 (C) such other regulations as the Director
9 finds necessary to carry out and ensure the en-
10 forcement of such subsection (c).

11 (2) REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING FACa.—Sec-
12 tion 7(c) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5
13 U.S.C. App.) is amended by inserting after “(c)” the
14 following: “The Administrator shall promulgate reg-
15 ulations as necessary to implement this Act.”.

16 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT THE FED-**
17 **ERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT AND PUB-**
18 **LIC DISCLOSURE.**

19 (a) DE FACTO MEMBERS.—Section 4 of the Federal
20 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended by
21 adding at the end the following:

22 “(d) TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AS MEMBER.—An
23 individual who is not a full-time or permanent part-time
24 officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be
25 regarded as a member of a committee if the individual

1 regularly attends and participates in committee meetings
2 as if the individual were a member, even if the individual
3 does not have the right to vote or veto the advice or rec-
4 ommendations of the advisory committee.”.

5 (b) INTERAGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—Section
6 11 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.
7 App.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

8 “(f) INTERAGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—(1)
9 Any communication between—

10 “(A) an interagency advisory committee estab-
11 lished by the President or the Vice President or any
12 member or staff acting on behalf of such an inter-
13 agency advisory committee, and

14 “(B) any person who is not an officer or em-
15 ployee of the Federal Government,
16 shall be made available for public inspection and
17 copying. Any portion of a communication that in-
18 volves a matter described in section 552(b) of title
19 5, United States Code, or that is subject to a valid
20 constitutionally based privilege against such disclo-
21 sure, may be withheld from public disclosure.

22 “(2) In this subsection, the term ‘interagency advi-
23 sory committee’ means any committee, board, commission,
24 council, conference, panel, task force, or other similar
25 group, or any subcommittee or other subgroup thereof, es-

1 tablished in the interest of obtaining advice or rec-
2 ommendations for the President or the Vice President,
3 that is composed wholly of full-time, or permanent part-
4 time, officers or employees of the Federal Government and
5 includes officers or employees of at least two separate Fed-
6 eral agencies but does not include an advisory committee
7 as defined in section 3(2) of this Act.

8 “(3) This subsection is not intended to apply to cabi-
9 net meetings, the National Security Council, the Council
10 of Economic Advisors, or any other permanent advisory
11 body established by statute.”

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

15 “(a) APPLICATION.—The provisions of this Act or of
16 any rule, order, or regulation promulgated under this Act
17 shall apply to each advisory committee, including any sub-
18 committee or subgroup thereof, except to the extent that
19 any Act of Congress establishing any such advisory com-
20 mittee specifically provides otherwise. Any subcommittee
21 or subgroup that reports to a parent committee estab-
22 lished under section 9(a) is not required to comply with
23 section 9(e). In this subsection, the term ‘subgroup’ in-
24 cludes any working group, task force, or other entity

1 formed for the purpose of assisting the committee or any
2 subcommittee of the committee in its work.”.

3 (d) COMMITTEES CREATED UNDER CONTRACT.—
4 Section 3(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5
5 U.S.C. App.) is amended in the matter following subpara-
6 graph (C) by adding at the end the following: “An advi-
7 sory committee is considered to be established by an agen-
8 cy, agencies, or the President, if it is formed, created, or
9 organized under contract, other transactional authority,
10 cooperative agreement, grant, or otherwise at the request
11 or direction of, an agency, agencies, or the President.”.

12 (e) ADVISORY COMMITTEES CONTAINING SPECIAL
13 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Section 4 of the Federal Ad-
14 visory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is further amended
15 by adding at the end the following new subsection:

16 “(e) SPECIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Com-
17 mittee members appointed as special government employ-
18 ees shall not be considered full-time or part-time officers
19 or employees of the Federal Government for purposes of
20 determining the applicability of this Act under section
21 3(2).”.

1 **SEC. 4. INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF ADVISORY COM-**
2 **MITTEES.**

3 (a) INFORMATION REQUIREMENT.—Section 11 of the
4 Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) is
5 amended—

6 (1) by striking the section designation and
7 heading and inserting the following:

8 **“SEC. 11. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.”;**

9 (2) by redesignating subsection (a) as sub-
10 section (d) and in that subsection—

11 (A) by inserting the following subsection
12 heading: “AVAILABILITY OF PAPER COPIES OF
13 TRANSCRIPTS.—”; and

14 (B) by inserting after “duplication,” the
15 following: “paper”;

16 (3) by striking “(b)” and inserting “(e) AGEN-
17 CY PROCEEDING DEFINED.—”; and

18 (4) by inserting before subsection (d), as redес-
19 igned by paragraph (2), the following new sub-
20 sections:

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

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

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

4 “(A) The process for identifying prospec-
5 tive members.

6 “(B) The process of selecting members for
7 balance of viewpoints or expertise.

8 “(C) A justification of the need for rep-
9 resentative members, if any.

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

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

14 “(B) The reason the member was ap-
15 pointed to the committee.

16 “(C) Whether the member is designated as
17 a special government employee or a representa-
18 tive.

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

22 “(E) Any conflict of interest relevant to
23 the functions to be performed by the committee.

24 “(4) A list of all members designated as special
25 government employees for whom written certifi-

1 cations were made under section 208(b) of title 18,
2 United States Code, a summary description of the
3 conflict necessitating the certification, and the rea-
4 son for granting the certification.

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

7 “(6) Transcripts or audio or video recordings of
8 all meetings of the committee.

9 “(7) Any written determination by the Presi-
10 dent or the head of the agency to which the advisory
11 committee reports, pursuant to section 10(d), to
12 close a meeting or any portion of a meeting and the
13 reasons for such determination.

14 “(8) Notices of future meetings of the com-
15 mittee.

16 “(9) Any additional information considered rel-
17 evant by the head of the agency to which the advi-
18 sory committee reports.

19 “(b) MANNER OF DISCLOSURE.—

20 “(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the
21 head of an agency shall make the information re-
22 quired to be disclosed under this section available
23 electronically on the official public internet site of
24 the agency at least 15 calendar days before each
25 meeting of an advisory committee. If the head of the

1 agency determines that such timing is not prac-
2 ticable for any required information, he shall make
3 the information available as soon as practicable but
4 no later than 48 hours before the next meeting of
5 the committee. An agency may withhold from disclo-
6 sure any information that would be exempt from dis-
7 closure under section 552 of title 5, United States
8 Code.

9 “(2) The head of an agency shall make avail-
10 able electronically, on the official public internet site
11 of the agency, a transcript or audio or video record-
12 ing of each advisory committee meeting not later
13 than 30 calendar days after the meeting.

14 “(c) PROVISION OF INFORMATION BY ADMINIS-
15 TRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES.—The Administrator of
16 General Services shall provide, on the official public inter-
17 net site of the General Services Administration, electronic
18 access to the information made available by each agency
19 under this section.”.

20 (b) CHARTER FILING.—Section 9(e) of the Federal
21 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), as redesignated
22 by section 2, is amended—

23 (1) by striking “with (1) the Administrator,”
24 and all that follows through “, or” and inserting
25 “(1) with the Administrator and”;

1 (2) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-
2 graph (I);

3 (3) by striking the period and inserting a semi-
4 colon at the end of subparagraph (J); and

5 (4) by adding at the end the following new sub-
6 paragraphs:

7 “(K) the authority under which the committee
8 is established;

9 “(L) the estimated number of members and a
10 description of the expertise needed to carry out the
11 objectives of the committee;

12 “(M) a description of whether the committee
13 will be composed of special government employees,
14 representatives, or members from both categories;
15 and

16 “(N) whether the committee has the authority
17 to create subcommittees and if so, the agency official
18 authorized to exercise such authority.”.

19 **SEC. 5. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEW AND REPORTS.**

20 (a) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United
21 States shall review compliance by agencies with the Fed-
22 eral Advisory Committee Act, as amended by this Act, in-
23 cluding whether agencies are appropriately appointing ad-
24 visory committee members as either special government
25 employees or representatives.

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

4 (1) The first report shall be submitted not later
5 than one year after the date of promulgation of reg-
6 ulations under section 2.

7 (2) The second report shall be submitted not
8 later than five years after such date of promulgation
9 of regulations.

10 (c) COMMITTEES.—The committees described in this
11 subsection are the Committee on Oversight and Govern-
12 ment Reform of the House of Representatives and the
13 Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-
14 fairs of the Senate.

15 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

16 Section 3 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5
17 U.S.C. App.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
18 lowing new paragraphs:

19 “(5) The term ‘representative’ means an indi-
20 vidual who is not a full-time or part-time employee
21 of the Federal Government and who is appointed to
22 an advisory committee to represent the views of an
23 entity or entities outside the Federal Government.

