Calendar No. 193

104TH CONGRESS, *1st Session* | SENATE | REPORT 104–147

CONGRESSIONAL AWARD AMENDMENTS ACT OF 1995

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS UNITED STATES SENATE

TOGETHER WITH

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

TO ACCOMPANY

S. 1267

SEPTEMBER 22 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 5), 1995.—Ordered to be printed

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

99–010 WASHINGTON : 1995

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SEPTEMBER 22 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 5), 1995.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. STEVENS (for Mr. ROTH), from the Committee on Governmental Affairs, filed the following

REPORT

together with

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

[To accompany S. 1267]

The Committee on Governmental Affairs, which has jurisdiction over the Congressional Award Act has hereby considered an original bill to extend the Congressional Awards Board and reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

I. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This bill provides for the reauthorization of the Congressional Award program through October 1, 1998 to ensure direct oversight on a regular basis. It also mandates continued General Accounting Office reports of the program's finances to be made to Congress annually.

II. HISTORY AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The Congress established the Congressional Award Program in 1979 to promote initiative, achievement and excellence among young people age 14–23 who dedicate time to public service, personal development and physical activities. The program is managed by a Congressional Award Board, which established a nonprofit corporation to carry out daily operations.

Since its inception, more than 5,500 young people from 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have earned bronze, sil-

ver or gold Congressional Awards. The volunteer public service hours accumulated in the process total more than 1,000,000.

With the exception of an unauthorized appropriation in December, 1987, the program has been and currently is financed entirely from private sources. The program was quite successful in fundraising from its inception to approximately 1986, subsequent to the first director's departure. The General Accounting Office conducted an evaluation of the program and an audit to comply with Public Law 99–161 in November 1988 and made several findings. GAO reported that while the program was operating well at the local council level, there were serious financial and administrative problems at the national level. The board was heavily in debt, its financial accounting system in disarray, and several questionable expenditures had been made. Further, there was a high number of vacancies on the Board, and a consequent inability to meet quorum requirements for meetings.

As a result of these problems, the Committee mandated a number of strict and substantial financial, administrative, and operational reforms and linked future reauthorizations to the Board's performance in meeting these objectives. Among these were: a reliable and accurate financial accounting system; elimination of past debts; imposition of term limits for Board members and attendance requirements; and, regular audits by the General Accounting Office.

At the House Subcommittee on Select Education hearing of July 12, 1990, GAO indicated that many of the problems identified in their November, 1988 report had either been resolved or were in the process of resolution. The program was reauthorized for 3 years in 1992. By fiscal year 1995 GAO reported the Congressional Award was no longer burdened by debt, and had achieved a fund balance of over $300,000. Much of the credit for this return to solvency can be attributed to increased interest in the program by the Congress, a revamped Board of Directors, and a downsized administrative structure staffed by people dedicated to the program's effectiveness and survival.

CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

The primary challenge for the Congressional Award program is increased participation. Accomplishing this goal will require elevated involvement in the program by individual Members of Congress and an emphasis on raising funds.

Despite the benefits of interaction with young constituents and their families, less than three-fifths of the States and less than one-tenth of Congressional Districts contain active Congressional Award Councils. This severely limits the number of young people aware of the programs existence and therefor, its level of participation. Individual Senators and House members should be made aware of what this program could mean to their constituents at no cost to the federal taxpayer. The establishment of Congressional Award Councils must be pursued in those States and Congressional districts where one does not currently exist.

As with any nonprofit corporation, the ability of the Congressional Award to be effective is directly dependent on the amount of money it raises. Despite the program's affiliation with the Con-

gress, in no year have donations to the program totaled over $1,000,000. The program's Administrative team has professionally overcome the burdens of their predecessors in erasing the debts which encumbered them and balancing the Fund's books. Now is the time to begin the Congressional Award's growth. Clearly, for this program to achieve the awareness, prestige and participation intended at its inception, it must raise the funds required.

III. Legislative History and Committee Consideration

On August 10, 1995, the full Committee on Governmental Affairs ordered favorably reported the bill, by a voice vote, without amendment.

IV. Section-by-Section Analysis

Section 1: Title.

Section 2: Extends the years for which the General Accounting Office is to submit annual reports on the Congressional Award's finances to Congress to 1997.

Section 3: Extends the authorization of the Congressional Award program to October 1, 1998.

V. Regulatory Impact

Pursuant to paragraph 11(b), rule XXVI of the standing rules of the Senate, the Committee, after due consideration, concludes that S. 1267 will have virtually no regulatory impact.

VI. CBO Cost Impact

This report includes no CBO cost estimate as no appreciation is requested.

VII. ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF SENATOR GLENN

I would like to add my support for the reauthorization of the Congressional Awards Program. It is one on which I have spent a great deal of time and effort.

My first experience with this program, however, was much different. A few years back—just as I was assuming Chair of this Committee—this program was in shambles. The significant sums of money raised from private sources were not being spent to expand the program and reach out to attract more young adults. Rather, they were being frittered away on staff salaries, lavish offices, personal items, and unofficial travel. Its accounts were in complete disarray, though it was difficult to redress; the Board went almost four years without a quorum to conduct business. Worst of all, an emergency appropriation had to be made to cover the shortfall—even though the original charter specifically spelled out there would be no federal funding.

At that time, in 1987–88, I came very close to removing this program from its emergency life support by withholding reauthorization. But I had to consider, and ultimately was convinced, that those who would suffer most would be the youth who had volunteered their time for community service and personal development—all under the Congressional imprimatur.

In the end, I agreed to keep this program alive by requiring extremely tough operational, administrative, and management criteria, particularly in the financial realm. I also drew a line in the sand: No more congressional bailouts. But I did have faith and confidence that with the right people on board, through hard work and commitment, this program could survive and flourish, supported by private sources without reliance on federal funds. It would fulfill its original mission to encourage our young people to set their own goals, volunteer their time, help their community, but more importantly, discover something about themselves. Besides the pride and satisfaction which comes from the giving of yourself for others, their only award is a medal with the Congressional seal. I am glad, parenthetically, that at least the awardees do not now have to pay for their own medals out of pocket.

So this program has been reenergized and transformed. It is a very moving experience to attend the Gold Award ceremonies in the Capitol and hear how our young people, rather than being detached and disinterested—as some have suggested about today's youth—have devoted their time to help out in homeless shelters, nursing homes, libraries, or cleaning up rivers and parks. All in the name of Congress, but with no rewards or reimbursement, save for the medal itself.

Now that this program has achieved a foundation of financial stability, I do wish to stress its next objective must be to engage in aggressive outreach and educational efforts. If this program is

ever to expand and become truly national in scope—and to justify our continued support and interest—more students must be enrolled. At some point in the near future, we have to be prepared to answer the question of whether all the time and energy spent to raise funds and manage the program is worth it, for only a few hundred medal awardees each year. Though this not yet the proper time to ask that question, we do really need to expand and improve those numbers.

In the meantime, I did want to express my appreciation to the efforts of the program staff and Board members for helping to turn this program around, and I wish them continued success.

JOHN GLENN.

VIII. Changes in Existing Law

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law to which no change is proposed is shown in Roman):

CONGRESSIONAL AWARD ACT

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PROCEDURES FOR FISCAL CONTROL

SEC. 5(2)(A) The Comptroller General of the United States shall determine, for calendar years 1993 [and 1994], *1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997* whether the Director has substantially complied with paragraph (1). The findings made by the Comptroller General under the preceding sentence shall be included in the first report submitted under section 807(b) of this title after December 31, 1994.

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TERMINATION

SEC. 9. The board shall terminate [October 1, 1995] *October 1, 1998.*

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