

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 4631, with An Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)

112TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4631

To amend title 5, United States Code, to institute spending limits and transparency requirements for Federal conference and travel expenditures, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 25, 2012

Mr. WALSH of Illinois (for himself, Mr. LONG, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. PAUL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

To amend title 5, United States Code, to institute spending limits and transparency requirements for Federal conference and travel expenditures, 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 “Government Spending
5 Accountability Act of 2012” or the “GSA Act of 2012”.

1 **SEC. 2. LIMITS AND TRANSPARENCY FOR CONFERENCE**
2 **AND TRAVEL SPENDING.**

3 (a) AMENDMENT.—Chapter 57 of title 5, United
4 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 5711
5 the following:

6 **“§ 5712. Limits and transparency for conference and**
7 **travel spending**

8 “(a) CONFERENCE TRANSPARENCY AND SPENDING
9 LIMITS.—

10 “(1) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF CONFERENCE
11 MATERIALS.—Each agency shall post on the public
12 website of that agency detailed information on any
13 presentation made by any employee of that agency
14 at a conference (except to the extent the head of an
15 agency excludes such information for reasons of na-
16 tional security) including—

17 “(A) the prepared text of any verbal pres-
18 entation made; and

19 “(B) any visual, digital, video, or audio
20 materials presented, including photographs,
21 slides, and audio-visual recordings.

22 “(2) LIMITS ON AMOUNT EXPENDED ON A CON-
23 FERENCE.—

24 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
25 subparagraph (B), an agency may not expend

1 more than \$500,000 to support a single con-
2 ference.

3 “(B) EXCEPTION.—The head of an agency
4 may waive the limitation in subparagraph (A)
5 for a specific conference after making a deter-
6 mination that the expenditure is justified as the
7 most cost-effective option to achieve a compel-
8 ling purpose. The head of an agency shall sub-
9 mit to the appropriate congressional committees
10 a report on any waiver granted under this sub-
11 paragraph, including the justification for such
12 waiver.

13 “(C) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing
14 in this paragraph shall be construed to preclude
15 an agency from receiving financial support or
16 other assistance from a private entity to pay or
17 defray the costs of a conference the total cost
18 of which exceeds \$500,000.

19 “(b) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE RULE.—An
20 agency may not pay the travel expenses for more than 50
21 employees of that agency who are stationed in the United
22 States, for any international conference, unless the Sec-
23 retary of State determines that attendance for such em-
24 ployees is in the national interest.

1 “(c) REPORT ON TRAVEL EXPENSES REQUIRED.—

2 At the beginning of each quarter of each fiscal year, each
3 agency shall post on the public website of that agency a
4 report on each conference for which the agency paid travel
5 expenses during the preceding 3 months that includes—

6 “(1) the itemized expenses paid by the agency,
7 including travel expenses, and any agency expendi-
8 tures to otherwise support the conference;

9 “(2) the primary sponsor of the conference;

10 “(3) the location of the conference;

11 “(4) the date of the conference;

12 “(5) a brief explanation of how the participa-
13 tion of employees from such agency at the con-
14 ference advanced the mission of the agency;

15 “(6) the title of any employee, or any individual
16 who is not a Federal employee, whose travel ex-
17 penses or other conference expenses were paid by the
18 agency;

19 “(7) the total number of individuals whose trav-
20 el expenses or other conference expenses were paid
21 by the agency; and

22 “(8) in the case of a conference for which that
23 agency was the primary sponsor, a statement that—

24 “(A) describes the cost to the agency of se-
25 lecting the specific conference venue;

1 “(B) describes why the location was se-
2 lected, including a justification for such selec-
3 tion;

4 “(C) demonstrates the cost efficiency of
5 the location;

6 “(D) provides a cost benefit analysis of
7 holding a conference rather than conducting a
8 teleconference; and

9 “(E) describes any financial support or
10 other assistance from a private entity used to
11 pay or defray the costs of the conference, and
12 for each case where such support or assistance
13 was used, the head of the agency shall include
14 a certification that there is no conflict of inter-
15 est resulting from such support or assistance.

16 “(d) **FORMAT AND PUBLICATION OF REPORT.**—Each
17 report posted on the public website under subsection (c)
18 shall—

19 “(1) be in a searchable electronic format; and

20 “(2) remain on that website for at least 5 years
21 after the date of posting.

22 “(e) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

23 “(1) **AGENCY.**—The term ‘agency’ has the
24 meaning given that term under section 5701, but

1 does not include the government of the District of
2 Columbia.

3 “(2) CONFERENCE.—The term ‘conference’
4 means a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or
5 event to which an employee travels 25 miles or more
6 to attend, that—

7 “(A) is held for consultation, education,
8 discussion, or training; and

9 “(B) is not held entirely at a Government
10 facility.

11 “(3) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE.—The term
12 ‘international conference’ means a conference occur-
13 ring outside the United States attended by rep-
14 resentatives of—

15 “(A) the Government of the United States;
16 and

17 “(B) any foreign government, international
18 organization, or foreign nongovernmental orga-
19 nization.”.

20 (b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—
21 The table of sections for chapter 57 of title 5, United
22 States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relat-
23 ing to section 5711 the following:

“5712. Limits and transparency for conference and travel spending.”.

24 (c) ANNUAL TRAVEL EXPENSE LIMITS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of each of fiscal
2 years 2013 through 2017, an agency (as defined
3 under section 5712(e) of title 5, United States Code,
4 as added by subsection (a)) may not make, or obli-
5 gate to make, expenditures for travel expenses, in an
6 aggregate amount greater than 70 percent of the ag-
7 gregate amount of such expenses for fiscal year
8 2010.

9 (2) IDENTIFICATION OF TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

10 (A) RESPONSIBILITIES.—Not later than
11 December 31, 2012, and after consultation with
12 the Administrator of General Services and the
13 Director of the Administrative Office of the
14 United States Courts, the Director of the Office
15 of Management and Budget shall establish
16 guidelines for the determination of what ex-
17 penses constitute travel expenses for purposes
18 of this subsection. The guidelines shall identify
19 specific expenses, and classes of expenses, that
20 are to be treated as travel expenses.

21 (B) EXEMPTION FOR MILITARY TRAVEL.—

22 The guidelines required under subparagraph
23 (A) shall exclude military travel expenses in de-
24 termining what expenses constitute travel ex-
25 penses. Military travel expenses shall include

1 travel expenses involving military combat, the
2 training or deployment of uniformed military
3 personnel, and such other travel expenses as de-
4 termined by the Director of the Office of Man-
5 agement and Budget, in consultation with the
6 Administrator of General Services and the Di-
7 rector of the Administrative Office of the
8 United States Courts.