

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 490

To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to improve morale within the Department of Homeland Security workforce by conferring new responsibilities to the Chief Human Capital Officer, establishing an employee engagement steering committee, requiring action plans, and authorizing an annual employee award program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 25, 2021

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security

A BILL

To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to improve morale within the Department of Homeland Security workforce by conferring new responsibilities to the Chief Human Capital Officer, establishing an employee engagement steering committee, requiring action plans, and authorizing an annual employee award program, 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.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Department of Home-
3 land Security Morale, Recognition, Learning and Engage-
4 ment Act of 2021” or the “DHS MORALE Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER RESPONSIBIL-**
6 **ITIES.**

7 Section 704 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002
8 (6 U.S.C. 344) is amended—

9 (1) in subsection (b)—

10 (A) in paragraph (1)—

11 (i) by inserting “, including with re-
12 spect to leader development and employee
13 engagement,” after “policies”;

14 (ii) by striking “and in line” and in-
15 serting “, in line”; and

16 (iii) by inserting “and informed by
17 best practices within the Federal govern-
18 ment and the private sector,” after “prior-
19 ities,”;

20 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “develop
21 performance measures to provide a basis for
22 monitoring and evaluating” and inserting “use
23 performance measures to evaluate, on an ongo-
24 ing basis,”;

1 (C) in paragraph (3), by inserting “that,
2 to the extent practicable, are informed by em-
3 ployee feedback” after “policies”;

4 (D) in paragraph (4), by inserting “includ-
5 ing leader development and employee engage-
6 ment programs,” before “in coordination”;

7 (E) in paragraph (5), by inserting before
8 the semicolon at the end the following: “that is
9 informed by an assessment, carried out by the
10 Chief Human Capital Officer, of the learning
11 and developmental needs of employees in super-
12 visory and non-supervisory roles across the De-
13 partment and appropriate workforce planning
14 initiatives”;

15 (F) by redesignating paragraphs (9) and
16 (10) as paragraphs (13) and (14), respectively;
17 and

18 (G) by inserting after paragraph (8) the
19 following new paragraphs:

20 “(9) maintain a catalogue of available employee
21 development opportunities, including the Homeland
22 Security Rotation Program pursuant to section 844,
23 departmental leadership development programs,
24 interagency development programs, and other rota-
25 tional programs;

1 “(10) ensure that employee discipline and ad-
2 verse action programs comply with the requirements
3 of all pertinent laws, rules, regulations, and Federal
4 guidance, and ensure due process for employees;

5 “(11) analyze each Department or Government-
6 wide Federal workforce satisfaction or morale survey
7 not later than 90 days after the date of the publica-
8 tion of each such survey and submit to the Secretary
9 such analysis, including, as appropriate, rec-
10 ommendations to improve workforce satisfaction or
11 morale within the Department;

12 “(12) review and approve all component em-
13 ployee engagement action plans to ensure such plans
14 include initiatives responsive to the root cause of em-
15 ployee engagement challenges, as well as outcome-
16 based performance measures and targets to track
17 the progress of such initiatives;”;

18 (2) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as
19 subsections (e) and (f), respectively;

20 (3) by inserting after subsection (c) the fol-
21 lowing new subsection:

22 “(d) CHIEF LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OFFI-
23 CER.—The Chief Human Capital Officer may designate
24 an employee of the Department to serve as a Chief Learn-

1 ing and Engagement Officer to assist the Chief Human
2 Capital Officer in carrying out this section.”; and

3 (4) in subsection (e), as so redesignated—

4 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (2), (3),
5 and (4) as paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respec-
6 tively; and

7 (B) by inserting after paragraph (1) the
8 following new paragraphs:

9 “(2) information on employee development op-
10 portunities catalogued pursuant to paragraph (9) of
11 subsection (b) and any available data on participa-
12 tion rates, attrition rates, and impacts on retention
13 and employee satisfaction;

14 “(3) information on the progress of Depart-
15 ment-wide strategic workforce planning efforts as
16 determined under paragraph (2) of subsection (b);

17 “(4) information on the activities of the steer-
18 ing committee established pursuant to section
19 711(a), including the number of meetings, types of
20 materials developed and distributed, and rec-
21 ommendations made to the Secretary;”.

1 **SEC. 3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE**
2 **AND ACTION PLAN.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Homeland Secu-
4 rity Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 341 et seq.) is amended by
5 adding at the end the following new section:

6 **“SEC. 711. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT.**

7 “(a) STEERING COMMITTEE.—Not later than 120
8 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the
9 Secretary shall establish an employee engagement steering
10 committee, including representatives from operational
11 components, headquarters, and field personnel, including
12 supervisory and non-supervisory personnel, and employee
13 labor organizations that represent Department employees,
14 and chaired by the Under Secretary for Management, to
15 carry out the following activities:

16 “(1) Identify factors that have a negative im-
17 pact on employee engagement, morale, and commu-
18 nications within the Department, such as percep-
19 tions about limitations on career progression, mobil-
20 ity, or development opportunities, collected through
21 employee feedback platforms, including through an-
22 nual employee surveys, questionnaires, and other
23 communications, as appropriate.

24 “(2) Identify, develop, and distribute initiatives
25 and best practices to improve employee engagement,
26 morale, and communications within the Department,

1 including through annual employee surveys, ques-
2 tionnaires, and other communications, as appro-
3 priate.

4 “(3) Monitor efforts of each component to ad-
5 dress employee engagement, morale, and commu-
6 nications based on employee feedback provided
7 through annual employee surveys, questionnaires,
8 and other communications, as appropriate.

9 “(4) Advise the Secretary on efforts to improve
10 employee engagement, morale, and communications
11 within specific components and across the Depart-
12 ment.

13 “(5) Conduct regular meetings and report, not
14 less than once per quarter, to the Under Secretary
15 for Management, the head of each component, and
16 the Secretary on Department-wide efforts to improve
17 employee engagement, morale, and communications.

18 “(b) ACTION PLAN; REPORTING.—The Secretary,
19 acting through the Chief Human Capital Officer, shall—

20 “(1) not later than 120 days after the date of
21 the establishment of the employee engagement steer-
22 ing committee under subsection (a), issue a Depart-
23 ment-wide employee engagement action plan, reflect-
24 ing input from the steering committee and employee
25 feedback provided through annual employee surveys,

1 questionnaires, and other communications in accord-
2 ance with paragraph (1) of such subsection, to exe-
3 cute strategies to improve employee engagement,
4 morale, and communications within the Department;
5 and

6 “(2) require the head of each component to—

7 “(A) develop and implement a component-
8 specific employee engagement plan to advance
9 the action plan required under paragraph (1)
10 that includes performance measures and objec-
11 tives, is informed by employee feedback pro-
12 vided through annual employee surveys, ques-
13 tionnaires, and other communications, as appro-
14 priate, and sets forth how employees and, where
15 applicable, their labor representatives are to be
16 integrated in developing programs and initia-
17 tives;

18 “(B) monitor progress on implementation
19 of such action plan; and

20 “(C) provide to the Chief Human Capital
21 Officer and the steering committee quarterly re-
22 ports on actions planned and progress made
23 under this paragraph.

1 “(c) TERMINATION.—This section shall terminate on
2 the date that is five years after the date of the enactment
3 of this section.”.

4 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
5 in section 1(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 is
6 amended by inserting after the item relating to section
7 710 the following new item:

“Sec. 711. Employee engagement.”.

8 (c) SUBMISSIONS TO CONGRESS.—

9 (1) DEPARTMENT-WIDE EMPLOYEE ENGAGE-
10 MENT ACTION PLAN.—The Secretary of Homeland
11 Security, acting through the Chief Human Capital
12 Officer of the Department of Homeland Security,
13 shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Secu-
14 rity of the House of Representatives and the Com-
15 mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-
16 fairs of the Senate the Department-wide employee
17 engagement action plan required under subsection
18 (b)(1) of section 711 of the Homeland Security Act
19 of 2002 (as added by subsection (a) of this section)
20 not later than 30 days after the issuance of such
21 plan under such subsection (b)(1).

22 (2) COMPONENT-SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE ENGAGE-
23 MENT PLANS.—Each head of a component of the
24 Department of Homeland Security shall submit to
25 the Committee on Homeland Security of the House

1 of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland
2 Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate the
3 component-specific employee engagement plan of
4 each such component required under subsection
5 (b)(2) of section 711 of the Homeland Security Act
6 of 2002 not later than 30 days after the issuance of
7 each such plan under such subsection (b)(2).

8 **SEC. 4. ANNUAL EMPLOYEE AWARD PROGRAM.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Homeland Secu-
10 rity Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 341 et seq.), as amended by
11 section 3 of this Act, is further amended by adding at the
12 end the following new section:

13 **“SEC. 712. ANNUAL EMPLOYEE AWARD PROGRAM.**

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may establish an
15 annual employee award program to recognize Department
16 employees or groups of employees for significant contribu-
17 tions to the achievement of the Department’s goals and
18 missions. If such a program is established, the Secretary
19 shall—

20 “(1) establish within such program categories
21 of awards, each with specific criteria, that empha-
22 sizes honoring employees who are at the non-super-
23 visory level;

1 “(2) publicize within the Department how any
2 employee or group of employees may be nominated
3 for an award;

4 “(3) establish an internal review board com-
5 prised of representatives from Department compo-
6 nents, headquarters, and field personnel to submit to
7 the Secretary award recommendations regarding
8 specific employees or groups of employees;

9 “(4) select recipients from the pool of nominees
10 submitted by the internal review board under para-
11 graph (3) and convene a ceremony at which employ-
12 ees or groups of employees receive such awards from
13 the Secretary; and

14 “(5) publicize such program within the Depart-
15 ment.

16 “(b) INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD.—The internal re-
17 view board described in subsection (a)(3) shall, when car-
18 rying out its function under such subsection, consult with
19 representatives from operational components and head-
20 quarters, including supervisory and non-supervisory per-
21 sonnel, and employee labor organizations that represent
22 Department employees.

23 “(c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
24 tion may be construed to authorize additional funds to
25 carry out the requirements of this section or to require

1 the Secretary to provide monetary bonuses to recipients
2 of an award under this section.”.

3 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
4 in section 1(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as
5 amended by section 3 of this Act, is further amended by
6 inserting after the item relating to section 711 the fol-
7 lowing new item:

“Sec. 712. Annual employee award program.”.

8 **SEC. 5. INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION AND IMPLEMENTA-**
9 **TION PLAN.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the
11 date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
12 of the United States shall investigate whether the applica-
13 tion in the Department of Homeland Security of discipline
14 and adverse actions are administered in an equitable and
15 consistent manner that results in the same or substantially
16 similar disciplinary outcomes across the Department for
17 misconduct by a non-supervisory or supervisor employee
18 who engaged in the same or substantially similar mis-
19 conduct.

20 (b) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out the investiga-
21 tion described in subsection (a), the Comptroller General
22 of the United States shall consult with the Under Sec-
23 retary for Management of the Department of Homeland
24 Security and the employee engagement steering committee
25 established pursuant to subsection (b)(1) of section 711

1 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (as added by sec-
2 tion 3(a) of this Act).

3 (c) ACTION BY UNDER SECRETARY FOR MANAGE-
4 MENT.—Upon completion of the investigation described in
5 subsection (a), the Under Secretary for Management of
6 the Department of Homeland Security shall review the
7 findings and recommendations of such investigation and
8 implement a plan, in consultation with the employee en-
9 gagement steering committee established pursuant to sub-
10 section (b)(1) of section 711 of the Homeland Security
11 Act of 2002, to correct any relevant deficiencies identified
12 by the Comptroller General of the United States in such
13 investigation. The Under Secretary for Management shall
14 direct the employee engagement steering committee to re-
15 view such plan to inform committee activities and action
16 plans authorized under such section 711.

17 **SEC. 6. IMPACTS OF SHUTDOWN.**

18 Not later than 90 days after the date of the enact-
19 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall
20 report to the Committee on Homeland Security of the
21 House of Representatives and the Committee on Home-
22 land Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate re-
23 garding the direct and indirect impacts of the lapse in ap-
24 propriations between December 22, 2018, and January
25 25, 2019, on—

1 (1) Department of Homeland Security human
2 resources operations;

3 (2) the Department's ability to meet hiring
4 benchmarks; and

5 (3) retention, attrition, and morale of Depart-
6 ment personnel.

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