

**Testimony of Daniel Schuman Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the
Legislative Branch, FY 2026, Concerning Agency Reports to Congress and the Clerk's
Tabulation of the Titles of Those Reports**

Dear Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and members of the House Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for written public witness testimony and for restoring the tradition of in-person public witness testimony. I commend the Committee's efforts on the FY 2025 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, aimed at responsibly strengthening congressional operations. I look forward to the Committee advancing congressional modernization on a bipartisan basis for FY 2026.

My name is Daniel Schuman, and I serve as the Executive Director of the American Governance Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to renewing and modernizing the institutions of American government. I am a former congressional staffer and a longtime supporter of the Subcommittee's work.

My testimony today concerns improving Congress's access to agency reports. The House and Senate routinely require federal agencies to provide reports to Congress on a wide range of policy matters. House Rules¹ require the Clerk to compile a list of mandated reports. Separately,

¹ House Rule II, clause 2(b). "At the commencement of every regular session of Congress, the Clerk shall make and cause to be delivered to each Member, Delegate, and the Resident Commissioner a list of the reports that any officer or Department is required to make to Congress, citing the law or resolution in which the requirement may be contained and placing under the name of each officer the list of reports required to be made by such officer."

federal law² — co-authored by Rep. Mike Quigley, who serves on the Committee — requires agencies to submit reports³ to the Government Publishing Office for publication on its website.⁴

These requirements are intended to (1) enable Members to identify agency reports on matters of legislative interest and (2) facilitate easy access to those reports. They also assist Congress in identifying duplicative or outdated reporting obligations.

As Congress previously noted:⁵

Agencies expend taxpayer-funded time and resources to produce [thousands of agency] reports which are intended to inform legislation or congressional oversight of agency operations, yet the general public and Congress itself faces obstacles in locating and reviewing these reports. In addition, when congressional staff who receive a report move on, or there is a transition at a committee, historical reports often are lost.

Despite these efforts, a significant implementation gap persists. If an agency fails to transmit a mandated report to GPO, there is no systematic method for identifying the omission. While GPO could compare received reports against the Clerk's list, the Clerk's list only covers reports mandated for submission to the full House or Senate, not those directed to committees or subcommittees.

² *Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act* (ACMRA), enacted as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY23 (P.L. 117-263, §7241-7248).

³ There are a number of exceptions for reports that could be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act and for other reasons.

⁴ <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/CMR>

⁵ S. Rept. 117-106

The Committee recognized this challenge in its FY 2025 report,⁶ directing the Clerk, the Library of Congress, GPO, and the Congressional Data Task Force to describe the challenges and opportunities associated with making these reports more readily available and discoverable.⁷

That report has not been submitted.

There are several potential solutions to close the implementation gap:

- ***Manual approach:*** Appropriate \$350,000 to fund two additional executive communications clerks in the Clerk's office to manually identify all reports required by statute, including those sent to committees and subcommittees.
- ***Technology-Based Approach:*** Direct the Clerk to develop or procure modern computational tools, including artificial intelligence when appropriate, to automate identification of reporting obligations. The feasibility and cost of this approach remain uncertain but could yield broader applications for legislative operations.
- ***Agency-Sourced Approach:*** Require or encourage agency congressional liaisons to submit their internal reporting obligation lists to the Clerk and GPO. While beneficial, this approach may pose reliability or jurisdictional concerns.

⁶ Testimony of Daniel Schuman before the House Legislative Branch Appropriations Committee, FY 25, available at:

<https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/117122/witnesses/HHRG-118-AP24-Wstate-SchumanD-20240417.pdf>

⁷ "Congressionally Mandated Reports.—The Committee recognizes the value of making statute-required reports more readily available and discoverable. The Committee requests that the Office of the Clerk, in consultation with the Library of Congress, the Government Publishing Office, and the Congressional Data Task Force, author a report describing the challenges and opportunities associated with making these reports more readily available and discoverable. The scope of the report shall include, but not be limited to (1) reports covered by Public Law 117–263 and listed in H. Doc. 118–4; (2) potential impacts, if enacted, of S. 2073, the Eliminate Useless Reports Act of 2023; and (3) if it is feasible that submitted reports to Congress be delivered to House committees electronically via the Clerk’s Committee portal in concert with the Government Publishing Office’s Congressionally Mandated Reports submission portal or GovInfo. The report shall be submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on House Administration within 180 days of enactment of this Act."

In any event, the Clerk should be tasked with creating a comprehensive, machine-readable tabulation of all statutorily required reports to Congress, including those directed to committees and subcommittees. This tabulation would allow GPO to automatically verify agency compliance.

The current state of compliance is alarming: only 716 mandated reports are available on the GPO's website, despite the expectation that thousands—if not tens of thousands—should be published annually.

Accordingly, we respectfully request the Committee:

- Direct the Clerk to identify all agency reports due to Congress, including to committees and subcommittees, beginning in FY 2026
- Appropriate \$350,000 to support implementation
- Direct the Clerk to consult with GPO and to provide regular progress updates to the Committee and to the Congressional Data Task Force.

Thank you for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.