

Statement of Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Full Committee Business Meeting
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

H.R. 8706: Dismantle DEI Act

H.R. 8706, the Dismantle DEI Act, rolls back years of progress dating back to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. By eliminating federal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and creating a structure that harshly penalizes their use in federal contracting, this legislation threatens decades of work to foster fair and equitable workplaces.

The bill's sweeping prohibitions and punitive measures would disproportionately harm federal workers and contractors—critical components of Northern Virginia's economy and my district. Specifically, this bill would terminate DEI offices and prohibit employees from transferring to new roles, effectively terminating them. Further, terminating DEI offices and preventing DEI considerations in federal contracting, hiring, and accreditation would stifle opportunities for members of underserved communities to contribute to our nation's success.

H.R. 9040: Taxpayer Exposure Risk Reduction Act

H.R. 9040, the Taxpayer Exposure Risk Reduction Act, would require federal agencies responsible for administering credit, guarantee, or insurance programs, to create a strategy and implementation plan to transfer credit, guarantee, and insurance risk to the private sector. This sets a sweeping, untested precedent by mandating broad privatization of federal credit, guarantee, and insurance risks. While proponents argue this policy minimizes government liability, the bill's broad scope and lack of clear accountability measures pose significant risks to taxpayers and beneficiaries alike.

The absence of clear implementation frameworks and oversight mechanisms for shifting responsibility for 148 federal programs to private entities makes this approach irresponsible at best. It would be reckless to enact such a dramatic and untested policy shift.

H.R. 10062: Freedom to Petition the Government Act

H.R. 10062 undermines the District of Columbia's authority to govern its own affairs by exempting certain external entities from D.C.'s business registration requirements. This measure infringes on the District's fundamental right to self-governance and is an attempt to insulate Republican affiliated organizations from effective oversight.

Granting exemptions for organizations whose sole activity is meeting with federal officials sets a dangerous precedent of selective interference in local governance. Congress should respect the autonomy of the District rather than using it as a vehicle for political convenience.

I am pleased to support other bipartisan, forward-looking measures considered today, including H.R. 10151 and H.R. 10132, which exemplify good governance.

H.R. 10151 enhances the work of the Chief Data Officer Council, fostering better data-driven decision-making, transparency, and operational efficiency across federal agencies. By prioritizing focus on emerging technologies and improving public access to federal data, this bill ensures our government remains adaptable and accountable.

Similarly, H.R. 10132 builds on the foundation of the Government Performance and Results Act by modernizing federal agency performance standards. By tying goals to the President's budget and improving public accountability, this legislation strengthens our accountability to the American people.

As we prepare to enter a new Congress, I urge my colleagues to prioritize commonsense reforms— especially measures that encourage good governance and transparency—rather than advancing partisan policies like H.R. 8706 that roll back rights and unfairly penalize hardworking federal employees. Let's focus on progress that benefits all Americans.