

FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
MARK-UP OF SEVERAL BILLS

for the

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MAY 21, 2025

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*Documents are available at: [docs.house.gov](https://docs.house.gov).*

## **FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING MARK-UP OF SEVERAL BILLS**

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**WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2025**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
*Washington, D.C.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:09 a.m., in room HVC-210, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. James Comer [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Comer, Turner, Gosar, Grothman, Cloud, Palmer, Higgins, Sessions, Biggs, Mace, Fallon, Donalds, Perry, Timmons, Burchett, Greene, Boebert, Luna, Langworthy, Burlison, Crane, Jack, McGuire, Gill, Norton, Lynch, Krishnamoorthi, Khanna, Mfume, Brown, Stansbury, Garcia, Frost, Lee, Casar, Crockett, Subramanyam, Ansari, Bell, Simon, Min, Pressley, and Tlaib.

Chairman COMER. The Committee will please come to order. A quorum is present.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 5(b) and House Rule XI, Clause 2, the Chair may postpone further proceedings today on the question of approving any measure or matter or adopting an amendment in which a recorded vote or the yays and nays are ordered.

The Committee will continue to use electronic system for recorded votes and amendments and passage of the bills before the Committee. Of course, should any technical issues arise, which I do not anticipate, we will immediately transition to traditional roll call votes. Any procedural or motion-related votes during today's markup will be dispensed with by traditional roll call vote.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 3490, the Esophageal Cancer Awareness Act. Will the clerk please report?

### **H.R. 3490, THE ESOPHAGEAL CANCER AWARENESS ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 3490, the Esophageal Cancer Awareness Act, to require the Government Accountability Office to produce a report on esophageal cancer, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 3490, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

Today we lost a true statesman. Gerry Connolly was a father, a husband, a friend, and a lifelong public servant that dedicated his life to his constituents, his community, and his country. I am deeply saddened to learn about his passing. From the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, Gerry Connolly was a devoted public servant for Virginia's 11th Congressional District. In Congress, Gerry Connolly was a friend to many of us. He was steadfast in fighting for what he believed in, but he always committed to bipartisanship where he thought we could agree. Over his tenure on this Committee, I am proud to say we co-sponsored eight bills together, including the Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act, the FedRAMP Authorization Act, and the Federal AI Governance and Transparency Act. And I know I am not alone in that many of the Republican Committee colleagues found Gerry Connolly to be a partner and a friend.

Esophageal cancer is one of the deadliest and fastest-growing cancer diagnosis among Americans today. The symptoms are often overlooked or misdiagnosed, leading to late detection and limited treatment options. I am proud to have joined Ranking Member Gerry Connolly in cosponsoring the Esophageal Cancer Awareness Act, and I have an amendment at the desk to rename this bill the Gerald E. Connolly Esophageal Cancer Awareness Act.

I now yield to the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your kind words on behalf of our friend. Thank you for the courtesy of renaming this bill in Gerry's memory.

Our Ranking Member Connolly lived his life serving others and making our country a better place. He was a steadfast advocate of the disadvantaged and voiceless, and he stood up for what was right and just. Gerry was a skilled legislator, a skilled statesman here in Congress, as well as our congressional representative to NATO. To the very end, Gerry was all about the work before us. I am sure he would want to tell everyone here to continue fighting like hell to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, defend the rights of every American, and bring accountability and transparency to power.

Gerry was the epitome of a public servant, and he will be deeply missed. It is our job now to continue his fight in his memory. Our prayers are with his wife, Cathy, and his daughter, Caitlin Rose, and his sister, Judge Rosemary Connolly of Massachusetts. May he be remembered in our prayers. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Ranking Member yields back. Does any other Member wish to be heard? Seeing none—oh, the Chair recognizes Mr. Krishnamoorthi from Illinois.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your very kind words about our dear friend. When I first entered Congress, I told him when I introduced myself in Illinois, I said,

“Hi, my name is Raja Krishnamoorthi,” and someone said to me, “Roger Christian Murphy,” and I told him that, and from that moment, we became fast friends because he was very proud of his Irish ancestry. And he was one of the funniest Members of Congress, always had a quip, always had a joke, always could shed light in a serious moment. He is a great man. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. Any other Members seek recognition? Yes, Mr. Subramanyam.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Yes. I just want to echo my condolences to Congressman Connolly’s family. Congressman Connolly was a friend and a mentor, and he is a titan in Virginia. I mean, he has been a leader for so long from back when he was Chair of the Board of Supervisors in Fairfax County. And you know, even though he has passed, his work, his spirit, everything about him, will live on, and certainly, he mentored so many of us in the Virginia delegation. I mean, I remember when I came to this Committee, you know, he gave me such great advice on how to be a good Member of Congress, not just here in the legislative body, but also to our constituents back home. He taught his staff to go the extra mile for their constituents, make the extra call. And even when he, you know, sparred with the other side, he still found ways to work collaboratively in a bipartisan way, and he really passed on a lot of great advice to me, but also just his spirit, I think, will live in all of us.

And so, I am so sad to have him leave us, and my heart goes out to his family and the entire staff here on the Oversight Committee, I know will miss him, and the entire Committee will as well. But I also want to thank him and his family for all that they have done for our country. And just know that we will all continue that work moving forward. And I thank the Chairman for naming this important bill after Congressman Connolly. So, I yield back. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition? Mr. Ranking Member.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, when we think about Gerry’s legacy, when I think about it, it really is embodied by his staff. Gerry has some longstanding and long-serving staff members, Collin Davenport and Jamie Smith, among others. I think both those gentlemen served with Gerry in his office and on Committee staff for over 17 years, and he was enormously proud of his staff. Every single person on his staff, he bragged on them and rightfully so. They are the best, and that is really part of his living legacy, the team that he put together in this office. And I just recall just two of the longest serving, but there were many that worked here with him and have moved on to other pursuits, but just want to thank them for their wonderful, wonderful support of Gerry throughout the years, and especially—and especially—in these last months when that support, that guidance, and those prayers were deeply felt. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, I now recognize myself for the purpose of offering an amendment. Clerk, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Clerk. Amendment to the amendment of the nature of a substitute to H.R. 3490, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read.

I reserve a point of order.

I recognize myself. This is the amendment to rename the bill after Gerry Connolly, and, again, I cannot say enough about how much respect I had for Gerry Connolly. He was a good guy. He was somebody that was here for the right reasons and cared deeply about his district. We disagreed a lot on policy, but I never questioned his sincerity or truthfulness or his knowledge of the issues. He was a great Member, and I enjoyed working with him, and this was the very last piece of legislation that he and I talked about. We had a list of some bipartisan bills. We had passed bills in the past together, and this was something, obviously, in the last two or three weeks he was very, very interested in, and I am very honored to offer an amendment to rename this bill, rightfully, after Gerry Connolly.

I yield back. Does any other Member seek—the Chair recognizes the Ranking Member to speak on the amendment.

Mr. LYNCH. Sure. I think this is one of the fitting tributes to Gerry. He has always been a champion on behalf of health services and healthcare, especially for Federal employees. As you know, Gerry, I believe, has the distinction of having more Federal employees in his district than any other, and he was valiantly in their service throughout his career here in Congress, and I think this is a fitting tribute.

Gerry and I sat about 18 inches apart for this past 20-some-odd years, so, we traveled together, did a lot of codels. I got elected on September 11, the day of the attacks on this country, and Gerry and I partnered up on a lot of the oversight responsibilities that emerged from that day traveling to Iraq and Afghanistan. Gerry was our lead in our dialog with NATO for many years, and he embodied the complete legislator. There are politicians, and there are statesmen. Gerry was a statesman. He took that job so seriously and for all the right reasons and was a wonderful reflection. Many times, during the Munich Security Conference, we would stop in Brussels, and Gerry would be working on behalf of this country, on behalf of Congress. And he was such a wonderful reflection of democracy and of the ideals of this country in that international body. He did that work quietly, but relentlessly, and we are forever in his debt. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Garcia from California.

Mr. GARCIA. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I want to echo everything that was just said by Mr. Lynch, and, Mr. Chairman, I also want, of course, to support this bill, but I also want to take a moment to recognize the tragic news we got this morning.

My heart goes out to our Ranking Member Connolly, his family, and his team at this awful moment. Gerry, of course, was a mentor to, I think, all of us on the Oversight Committee, a dedicated public servant, a fighter, and certainly someone who really believed in the power of government. He had shared with me his experience, of course, as a county executive and his work that he did even prior



to getting to Congress, and I think as a champion for Federal workers, this really makes sense. I think all of us, of course, pray for his family and his friends, and certainly his presence here in Congress will be missed but always remembered. And so, with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment offered by myself.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 3490, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill—

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. Yes.

Mr. LYNCH. I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 2409, the Guidance Clarity Act.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 2409, THE GUIDANCE CLARITY ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 2409, a bill to require a guidance clarity statement on certain agency guidance, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

Will the clerk please designate the amendment?

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 2409, as is offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute is considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for statement on the bill and amendment.

The Guidance Clarity Act is an important reform that clarifies what agency regulatory guidance is and what it is not. Agency guidance plays a key role in the Federal regulatory system. Often, it is unclear how Federal statutes or regulations will be administered by a Federal agency.

Agency guidance is important to help small businesses and individual households understand how Federal agencies will carry out the law and implement programs. These entities typically cannot afford high-priced attorneys to help them understand all the legal nuances that apply to them. So, when an agency issues guidance to clarify an issue that helps to avoid unnecessary expense, but, and this is a critical distinction, agency guidance is not the law itself. However, Federal agencies sometimes use guidance documents to intimidate entities into compliance with agency views. Other times they try to evade the Administrative Procedure Act's congressional review requirements for issuing binding rules by cleverly slipping what they intend to be rules into guidance documents. Agencies have even been known to threaten enforcement action based on mere guidance.

Recognizing the problem, the first Trump Administration's Justice Department issued a formal policy and adopted regulations to prevent its lawyers from bringing such enforcement actions based merely on guidance documents. Unfortunately, President Biden's Justice Department rescinded the policy and related regulations, so, once again, the threat of abuse became a reality for Americans. H.R. 2409 solves this problem by requiring regulatory guidance documents to stipulate that they do not have the force and effect of law. With that simple addition, agencies will no longer be able to intimidate regulated parties, unfairly threaten enforcement actions, or impose rules disguised as agency guidance, but agencies will certainly still be free to issue guidance documents to help regulated entities understand how agencies intend to administer the law.

I want to thank Reps. Jared Golden and Donald Davis for their bipartisan co-sponsorship, and I especially want to thank Representative Eric Burlison, the bill's sponsor, for reintroducing the bill of this Congress and working to ensure this bipartisan reform is enacted in a law. I now recognize Ranking Member Connolly [sic].

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, H.R. 2409 would require all guidance statements to explicitly State on the first page that it does not have the force of law. Making Federal regulatory guidance clearer is a desirable goal, but this bill may have the effect of confusing entities that have to implement Federal regulation using the guidance that is provided. Although agency-issued guidance to the public does not literally have the force of law, stating this on every piece of guidance would be tremendously confusing and, I believe, misleading, particularly for all the statutory programs and regimes that rely on a combination of statute

and implementing guidance in the real world to function properly. For example, we do not place a disclaimer on stop signs that say this stop sign does not have the force of law. That could lead to a lot of people running stop signs and having accidents, then denying responsibility for their actions because the disclaimer told them not to worry about it.

Similarly, this legislation would furnish regulated entities many more opportunities to escape the law and to bring frivolous suits over agency guidance with the inevitable result that agencies would be unable to hold polluters accountable, protect workers' safety, and ensure that the public has access to health, safety, and food. For those reasons, I strongly oppose this bill in its current form. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair now recognizes the sponsor of the bill, the Subcommittee Chairman Burlison from Missouri.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Committee, I am here to urge you to support the Guidance Clarity Act, H.R. 2409. This is a bipartisan bill. It ensures transparency and fairness by requiring Federal agencies to clearly state on each guidance document, "The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and do not of themselves bind the public or the agency in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies."

This bill is about clarity. Agency guidance plays a vital role in helping the public understand how agencies interpret law and policies, but too often, the agencies abuse this tool. They issue guidance that intimidates small businesses and individuals into compliance, sometimes under the threat of enforcement. Many lack the legal resources to know what guidance is not, that it is not binding, and they feel forced to comply with what is merely an agency's opinion. How is that transparent or fair? This bill will fix this.

It is also about accountability. Agencies have been known to skirt the Administrative Procedures Act requirements for issuing binding rules by slipping so-called non-rule rules into guidance documents. Courts have struck down these tactics, but the problem persists. During President Trump's first term, the Justice Department took steps to prevent enforcement based on guidance alone, but those protections were rescinded under President Biden. The threat of abuse is real, and it undermines the trust in our government. The Guidance Clarity Act closes it by ensuring that guidance cannot be mistaken for something that people that were actually elected, lawmakers, passed as law. Finally, this bill is about protecting small businesses and ordinary Americans who often cannot afford legal teams to challenge agency overreach. They deserve to know in plain language that guidance is just that: guidance, not a mandate. This bill empowers them to push back without fear of unfair enforcement.

Members of the Committee, this is a straightforward solution to a real problem. It promotes transparency, upholds the rule of law, and protects those who can least afford to navigate the bureaucratic overreach. Last Congress, the Oversight Committee favorably reported an identical version of this bill, and let us build on

that momentum, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Thank you for your leadership, Mr. Burlison, on this bill.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, D.C.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield to Mr. Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentlelady. Let us be clear. I mean, if you really think that this is a clarification by putting this statement on each guidance, have you ever taken a bill that we pass and tried to read it, especially when it refers to maybe a half dozen other bills that we have passed in previous Congresses? It is complete gobbledygook when you read the statute. When you read the statute, it is totally confounding. You cannot put five sentences together to come up with a lucid thought when you read it. To suggest that a small business owner, Mr. Chairman, would go to the statute and try to figure out what the hell Congress intended is lunacy. Look at some of the bills that we pass here. Read the text. It is completely incomprehensible. It doesn't make sense at all. The guidance is there as a synthesis of what congressional intent is on that piece of legislation. It actually helps to translate the complex legalistic statutory language that Congress has enacted. It allows that small business owner to act in compliance with that statute.

And I totally get the gentleman's point that sometimes a particular agency might go afield of the guidance or might misstate the guidance, and we challenge that on occasion when we believe that congressional intent is not being followed. That becomes a matter for the courts because they read the statute, they look at the guidance, and sometimes—sometimes—which happened recently in Financial Services, there is a direct order to modify the guidance. That is what they did with the SEC. They changed the guidance for banks on cryptocurrency. So, I get the spirit of the gentleman's bill, and it has been here before. I think Mr. Palmer was a sponsor in previous Congresses, so I get that, but to disavow or to discount the value of that guidance, I think, creates great confusion. It undermines the rule of law. It undermines the rule of law. It does not assist the rule of law or clarify the rule of law. It creates confusion and doubt in terms of how we conduct ourselves in this society, right? The laws in this country are the software of our democracy. It embodies rights and ideals and provides recourse for those who feel that their rights of freedom, the freedom to contract, private property, all those elements that make us Americans. This would be corrosive, I believe, to that effort to maintain the rule of law at a very time when we need it so desperately.

You know, as Members of this Committee know, you know, in our oversight responsibility, we travel frequently to failed states, whether it is Afghanistan or Iraq or Somalia. We have been to all those places time and time again, and one of the common elements of a failed state is that they lack an adherence to the rule of law, and in many cases, they lack an independent judiciary. So, I think this type of confusion of diluting the force of law by dismissive language on guidance will harm adherence to the rule of law. It will damage the respect for the rule of law by adding frivolous language to the guidance that means to interpret that very law. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Do any other Members wish to be heard?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

Mr. LYNCH. I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. Pursuant to House rules, further proceedings on this measure will be postponed.

Mr. LYNCH. Yes, I will withdraw that request.

Chairman COMER. Ranking Member Lynch withdraws that.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2409 as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably.

Mr. LYNCH. Now I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. Okay. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 67, Modernizing Retrospective Regulatory Review Act.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 67, THE MODERNIZING RETROSPECTIVE REGULATORY REVIEW ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 67, the Modernizing Retrospective Regulatory Review Act, a bill to require the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, OIRA, to issue guidance for using technology to retrospectively review existing Federal regulations, and, in consultation with relevant agencies, report on the progress of the Federal Government in making agency regulations available in a machine-readable format.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 67, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for purpose of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill, Representative Biggs from Arizona, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for taking up this bill today.

I support obviously my bill, H.R. 67, the Modernizing Retrospective Regulatory Review Act. This bill builds on President Trump's deregulatory agenda, which is to cut red tape, restore accountability, and put American businesses first. Under his leadership, we have seen how pro-growth policies lift burdens and unleash opportunity. H.R. 67 carries that mission forward. American businesses must be free to grow without being buried under outdated, duplicative rules from the D.C. swamp. Thousands of regulations stack up every year, and agencies lack the tools to clear them out. President Trump understands this. That is why H.R. 67 matters. It brings in modern tools like artificial intelligence to help agencies identify obsolete or conflicting rules faster and more efficiently.

I also want to highlight support from the Administrative Conference of the United States, which is an independent agency that advises the President, Congress, and Federal agencies on improving administrative process. And I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter from the Office of the Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the United States, which highlights the ACUS recommendations that are included in my bill.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. H.R. 67 saves taxpayer dollars, cuts red tape and clears a path for American job creators. I urge my colleagues to support it, and with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Lynch for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I cannot accept the current form of this bill. I cannot support it. The bill would require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget to issue a report within six months on the progress of the Federal Government in making regulations available in a machine-readable format. This is a laudable goal. However, the bill would also require the Administrator to issue guidance—there we go with guidance—within one year on how agencies can use technology to identify, through retrospective review of regulation, typographical errors and inaccurate cross references. These are reasonable steps to help modernize the regulatory process. However, the bill adds onerous new requirements for the agencies to submit detailed plans for which regulations they plan to retrospectively review and to implement those plans beginning six months after they are submitted.

The bill also creates an open-ended authority giving agency heads the discretion to review regulations when such review is not required by statute. So, when we compare the previous bill, which undermined guidance, this adds a layer of guidance, further confusing the overall intent of Congress in the statute. This could be a dangerous tool in the wrong hands and allow for more resources being used on reviewing rules than actually writing those rules, which I suspect would please the author of this bill. I have a letter from the Coalition for Sensible Safeguards that addresses these issues, and I ask unanimous consent to include it in the record.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. LYNCH. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize myself to speak in favor of Representative Biggs' bill.

As the regulatory state grows, Congress must ensure agencies review the regulations that currently exist. Many agencies are already required to engage in periodic retrospective review. Retrospective review helps agencies decide if the current regs impacting the lives of American businesses and consumers need to be revisited. Modern technology, including AI, has the potential to make these agency reviews more efficient and cost effective, and can also improve the accuracy of final assessments.

The Modernizing Retrospective Regulatory Review Act requires the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance on how agencies can use modern technology in the retrospective review process. Agencies are then required to develop a strategy for how to implement the guidance. Agencies must also identify all regulations that would benefit from retrospective review and not just those they are required to review. Each of these requirements in H.R. 67 align with the recommendations from the Administrative Conference of the U.S. whose mission is to improve Federal agency processes to make them fairer and more efficient. These recommendations are non-controversial and nonpartisan, and they reflect the House Oversight Committee's commitment to meaningful oversight of the Federal Government's growing regulatory state. I encourage my colleagues to support the Biggs bill that increases efficiency and fairness within our Federal Government's regulatory review process. I want to thank Andy Biggs for introducing this necessary legislation, and I yield back.

Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, say no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now in favor of reporting H.R. 67, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it and the bill is ordered favorably amended [sic].

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Chairman, I would like a recorded vote on that.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings of the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 689, the FREE Act.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

#### **H.R. 689, THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND EXPEDITED ENFORCEMENT (FREE) ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 689, the FREE Act, a bill to require each agency to evaluate the permitting system of an agency to consider whether

permitting by rule could replace that system, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 689, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes on statement on the bill and amendment.

H.R. 689, the Full Responsibility and Expedited Enforcement Act, or FREE Act, provides desperately needed reform in Federal permitting. Federal permitting has been far too slow for far too long. Just ask former President Obama, who learned that many projects during his presidency were never shovel ready, or look to projects that were supposed to be permitted in the wake of COVID-19, but were bogged down by bureaucratic review. The FREE Act promises relief for all permit applicants, whether for infrastructure, home construction, critical minerals mining, farming, ranching, building out domestic manufacturing capabilities, or a host of other worthy activities. The bill takes a proven permit streamlining concept permitting-by-rule and pushes its adoption governmentwide across all types of permitting.

Permitting-by-rule is a process in which the government establishes the conditions an applicant needs to meet to qualify for a permit, and then allows applicants to obtain a permit by certifying that they meet these conditions. This process saves time and reduces administrative burden. This bill allows agencies to provide permits for common activities using the permitting-by-rule process. Further, H.R. 689 requires that unless the agency has made a final approval decision, an application for permit under the permitting-by-rule process be automatically granted within 180 days if the application contains an adequate certification of the requirements. This legislation also requires agencies to advise permit applicants of any deficiencies in their applications for coverage under permit rule, affording applicants an opportunity to supply corrections to avoid denial of coverage.

In summary, the FREE Act creates a powerful incentive for agencies to do their job, to review permit applications within the required time period and issue decisions, up or down, on whether applicants get their permits. I want to thank Representative Maloy for her leadership on the issue. I urge my colleagues to support this important and sensible reform legislation. I now yield to Ranking Member Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Federal agencies review permit applications required for different types of projects including infrastructure, transportation, energy, and mining. The agencies consider important factors, such as whether a project is in the public interest, whether it would pollute our air



and water, and whether it would be a good use of our public lands. The Full Responsibility and Expedited Enforcement Act, or FREE Act, is not a regulatory relief measure, but it would free corporations to pollute our waters and lands for oil, gas, and mining projects. The permit reform embodied in this FREE Act would strip agencies of the ability to do a proper review of essentially any permit applications that they receive on a case-by-case basis. The agencies would have to create processes that would lead to categorical approval of permits if applicants meet basic limited threshold standards.

This attack on public permitting review includes additional provisions that would favor corporate applicants over the expertise of the civil servants who work to protect our lands and access to clean air and clean water. For example, the bill would free an applicant to skip over the administrative appeal process and immediately sue the Federal Government and U.S. District Court if a permit is denied or if a permit holder's action is restricted due to non-compliance with permit requirements. The bill also shifts the burden of proof onto the agency to show that an applicant did not meet the already limited standards, rather than requiring an applicant to prove that it did meet those standards.

The bill further empowers corporate polluters and discourages Federal enforcement actions by requiring Federal agencies to pay for the attorney's fees of a permit holder or applicant that prevails under the completely skewed legal conditions provided under this bill. Perhaps most alarmingly, this permit-by-rule system would eliminate any opportunity for the public to weigh in on permit applications through a notice and comment period. These are the people we work for.

I have a quickly growing city—the city of Boston, city of Quincy, city of Brockton—in my district, and right now, under that permit process, there is an opportunity for neighbors and abutters and impacted communities to be involved. This bill would prevent the communities who would be directly affected by permitting projects from having their voices heard when their land could be taken or their water or air polluted. I strongly encourage my colleagues to vote no on this bill and maintain Federal agencies' ability to thoroughly review permit applications to ensure that all proper measures are taken to protect our lands, air, and water under the rule of law. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, say no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 689 as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Chairman, I ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 884, to prohibit individuals who are not citizens of the United States from voting in elections in the District of Columbia and to repeal the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act Of 2022.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 884, TO PROHIBIT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NOT CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES FROM VOTING IN ELECTIONS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND TO REPEAL THE LOCAL RESIDENT VOTING RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT OF 2022**

The Clerk. H.R. 884, to prohibit individuals who are not citizens of the United States from voting in elections in the District of Columbia and to repeal the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 884, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. I recognize myself for 5 minutes.

On November 21, 2022, the D.C. Government enacted the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act, permitting non-citizen residents to vote in local D.C. elections. This includes illegal immigrants and even foreign diplomats whose interest may be opposed to the interests of Americans. This radical change to D.C.'s election laws upset lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. D.C. Mayor Bowser withheld her signature on the act, something she has done only a handful of times, and last Congress when an identical bill was brought to the Floor, 262 Members voted in favor, including 52 Democrats.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. Unfortunately, the Senate refused to take up this bipartisan commonsense bill to maintain election integrity in our Nation's Capital. The right to vote is a defining privilege of American citizenship. Diluting that right to its non-citizens, whether here legally or illegally, undermines the voice of D.C. residents. Article I of the Constitution grants Congress exclusive jurisdiction over the Nation's Capital, and the House Oversight Committee is charged with ensuring responsible governance in the District, including its election laws. I urge my colleagues to support Representative Pfluger's bill to restore commonsense protections and ensure that only U.S. citizens have the right to vote in local D.C. elections.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. I now recognize Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I strongly oppose this undemocratic, paternalistic bill. I ask unanimous consent to submit into the record a letter from the Council of the District of Columbia opposing this bill.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. Last Congress, Republicans introduced 14 bills or amendments to prohibit non-citizens from voting in D.C., or to repeal, nullify, or prohibit the carrying out of D.C.'s law that permits non-citizens to vote. Yet, Republicans refuse to make the only election law change D.C. has asked Congress to make, which is the right to hold elections for voting Members of the House and Senate.

I want to discuss democracy or lack thereof in D.C. D.C. has no voting representation in Congress, and Congress has the ultimate say on local matters. While Congress has the authority to legislate on local D.C. matters, it is not required to do so. In Federalist 43, James Madison said of D.C. residents, "A municipal legislature for local purposes derived from their own suffrages will, of course, be allowed them." The Supreme Court held in 1953 that, "There is no constitutional barrier to the delegation by Congress to the District of Columbia of full legislative power."

D.C.'s local legislature has 13 members. If D.C. residents do not like how the members vote, residents can vote them out or pass a ballot measure. That is called democracy. Congress has 533 voting Members. None are elected by D.C. residents. If D.C. residents do not like how Members vote on local matters, residents cannot vote them out. That is the antithesis of democracy. The substance of H.R. 884 is irrelevant since there is never justification for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters. However, I will briefly discuss it.

While D.C.'s Local Voting Rights Amendment Act allows non-citizens to vote only in local D.C. elections, non-citizen voting at every level of government has been part of the history of the United States since its founding. Forty states have allowed non-citizens to vote, nearly 20 cities today allow non-citizens to vote in local elections, and Congress only first prohibited non-citizens from voting in Federal elections 29 years ago.

I will close with a plea to Republicans: pass the Bipartisan D.C. Local Funds Act to reverse the \$1 billion cut in the continuing resolution made to the local D.C. budget. That bill has held back at the desk of the House since the Senate passed it nine weeks ago, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Do any other Members seek recognition? The Chair recognizes Ranking Member Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I discuss H.R. 884, I must note that today marks nine weeks since the Senate passed the Bipartisan District of Columbia Local Funds Act of 2025, which would undo the \$1 billion cut to the D.C. local budget in the House Republican drafted Fiscal Year 2025 full year continuing resolution. The Republican-led Senate understood immediately the cut's harms, and passed the D.C. Local Funds Act within hours of its introduction by Republican Senator Susan Collins, the Chair of the Committee on Appropriations in the Senate. On March 28, President Trump called on the House to pass the D.C. Local Funds Act immediately, yet Speaker Johnson said last week that the House

has been too busy to act on it, though the House found time two weeks ago to rename the Gulf of Mexico.

The D.C. local budget consists entirely of revenue raised by D.C. It is their local tax, which is why the Congressional Budget Office concluded the D.C. Local Funds Act would have “no effect on the Federal budget.” For the last two decades, Congress allowed D.C. to spend under its current local budget for the duration of every continuing resolution. However, the Fiscal Year 2025 full year CR forced D.C. to revert to its Fiscal Year 2024 local budget. Compounding the harm, D.C. will have to implement the cut with only four months remaining in the fiscal year. D.C. may have to lay off or furlough employees, close government facilities, and reduce critical services. I call on Speaker Johnson to bring the D.C. Local Funds Act to the Floor immediately and to end this sabotage.

I will turn to H.R. 884. I oppose the bill because D.C. should be free to govern its own local affairs. D.C.’s Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022 allows non-citizens to vote only in local elections, namely for Mayor, members of the City Council, State Board of Education, Attorney General, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and ballot measures. I thought Republicans believed in local control of local affairs. Regardless of one’s view on the merits of non-citizen voting, we must acknowledge that D.C. is not the first or only jurisdiction to permit it. At various points in American history, Congress and 40 states have allowed non-citizens to vote in local, state, territorial, and Federal elections. In fact, every state except ones represented by Republicans on this committee has allowed non-citizens to vote, including the home state of the Chairman and the sponsor of H.R. 884. Today, approximately 20 municipalities permit non-citizens to vote in local, local elections.

This Committee is considering the wrong legislation relating to D.C. elections. Instead, as the delegate for D.C. has pointed out, it should be considering H.R. 51, the D.C. Statehood Bill, which would give more than 700,000 D.C. residents voting representation in Congress and full home rule. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the noes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 884 as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported as amended.

Mr. LYNCH. A recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A vote has been requested. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 2096, the Protecting Our Nation's Capital Emergency Act of 2025.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 2096, THE PROTECTING OUR NATION'S CAPITAL  
EMERGENCY ACT**

The Clerk. H.R. 2096, the Protecting our Nation's Capital Emergency Act of 2025, a bill to restore the right to negotiate matters pertaining to the discipline of law enforcement officers of the District of Columbia through collective bargaining, to restore the statute of limitations for bringing disciplinary actions against members or civilian employees of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute. The clerk please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 2096, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. The amendment is considered as read.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

The men and women of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department serve their community every day to keep the district safe and secure. In doing so, members of the department routinely place themselves in dangerous situations to protect others, and yet, progressive D.C. Council policies have targeted district police officers and needlessly placed them in unsafe situations. On January 4, 2023, the D.C. Council passed the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022. The act targeted D.C. police officers, taking away employee protections and making their jobs more difficult despite rising crime in the district. When the D.C. Council passed this law, Congress acted swiftly and in a bipartisan, bicameral fashion to overturn it.

The House and Senate passed House Joint Resolution 42, which would have overturned the entire D.C. law with 14 House Democrats and six Senate Democrats joining Republicans in support of the resolution. Then President Biden, however, vetoed H.J.R. 42, allowing the harmful policies of the D.C. Council to remain in effect today. In another attempt to protect D.C. Police, Representative Garbarino introduced a second bill to repeal certain provisions of D.C.'s Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act. The bill also passed through this Committee last Congress.

This bill H.R. 2096 is identical to that last legislation. H.R. 2096 restores D.C. police officers' right to collectively bargain over disciplinary matters and restores clear timelines for disciplinary investigations, putting them back on equal footing with other unionized employees in the District. H.R. 2096 also repeals the D.C. Council's requirement at the time and place of some adverse action hearings be posted to a public website. This public posting require-

ment would allow activists to harass officers attempting to pursue their due process in the workplace. This legislation is necessary to support the recruitment and retention of the Metropolitan Police Department.

D.C. cannot afford to lose police officers during the ongoing crime crisis. My Republican colleagues recognize the importance of supporting the law enforcement officers who risk their lives to protect our communities. By restoring employee protections, this legislation gives the Metropolitan Police Department officers the due process they deserve. Everyone should feel safe right here in the Capital City, and I am proud to support this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. I now yield to the Ranking Member for his statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I oppose H.R. 2096, which would repeal provisions of a law enacted by the District of Columbia. The more than 700,000 D.C. residents deserve self-government, and the Supreme Court has held Congress may delegate full legislative authority to D.C. for local matters. We are here considering a bill Republicans claim will increase the retention and recruitment of D.C. police officers at the same time that Republicans are refusing to undo the outrageous \$1 billion cut they made to the D.C. local budget in the Fiscal Year 2025 full year continuing resolution. As a result of that cut, D.C. imposed a city-wide freeze on hiring promotions, overtime pay and bonuses, and may soon lay off or furlough employees, including police officers.

Nine weeks ago, immediately after passage of the CR, the Republican-led Senate, with the support of President Trump, passed the Bipartisan District of Columbia Local Funds Act of 2025, which would reverse the \$1 billion cut. The House has not acted on it.

I ask unanimous consent to submit into the record a letter from the National Fraternal Order of Police to House leadership urging passage of the D.C. Local Funds Act, which it called “critical to preserving the ability of the Metropolitan Police Department to protect the residents and visitors to the District of Columbia.”

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. LYNCH. Before I turn to the substance of H.R. 2096, I want to address the bill’s purpose section, which says the purpose is “to combat the rise in violent crime in our Nation’s Capital.” However, violent crime is not rising in D.C. In fact, year-to-date violent crime is down 23 percent, and last year, violent crime was down 35 percent, reaching its lowest level in over 30 years.

Police officers are entrusted with extraordinary authority to carry out their public service mission. The vast majority of officers exercise it honorably and bravely. However, there must be accountability and transparency for those instances in which a police officer might violate their oath of office. Following the devastating murder of George Floyd in 2020, the D.C. City Council enacted the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022. This legislation included provisions allowing the D.C. chief of police to discipline and terminate officers who have committed serious misconduct. Every single D.C. police chief for the past 25 years has explicitly requested this authority. H.R. 2096 would inexplicably repeal that authority. Republicans blame the comprehensive policing and justice reform amending act for D.C.’s dif-

faculty retaining and recruiting police officers. However, they fail to mention that police departments across the country have had difficulty retaining and recruiting police officers since before the policing reforms enacted after the murder of George Floyd.

I want to close with a question for my Republican colleagues. If you support police officers, why haven't you installed on the western front of the Capitol the honorific plaque listing the names of the brave police officers, including from the D.C. Police Department, who defended this Capitol on January 6? Federal law requires its installation by March 15, 2023. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, I strongly oppose this bill. The more than 700,000 District of Columbia residents are capable and worthy of self-government.

I ask unanimous consent to submit into the record letters from the D.C. Mayor and the D.C. Council opposing this bill.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. NORTON. This bill would repeal police discipline provisions in D.C.'s Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act. Last Congress, Republicans introduced seven bills or amendments to nullify or prohibit D.C. from carrying out that law or police discipline provisions thereof.

Let us discuss the justification and timing of this bill. Though it is always wrong and never the right time for Congress to legislate on local D.C. matters, the text of this bill says repealing the police discipline provisions is necessary to combat rising violence in D.C. and to improve the retention and recruitment of police officers. This Committee may not be aware that violent crime reached a more than 30-year low in D.C. last year and is down 21 percent this year. This Committee also may not be aware that police departments of all sizes, in both red and blue states throughout the country, are struggling to retain and recruit officers, and they have been doing that for many years.

The timing of the introduction and markup of this bill is stunning. This bill was introduced three days after House Republicans passed a continuing resolution that cut D.C.'s local budget by \$1 billion. That act of fiscal sabotage, which did not save the Federal Government any money, has led to a freeze on overtime, hiring, and pay raises, and furloughs or layoffs may be next. Nine weeks ago today, the Senate passed the D.C. Local Funds Act to reverse the cut. The D.C. Local Funds Act is just sitting in the House. Like President Trump and the National Fraternal Order of Police, I call on the House to pass immediately the D.C. Local Funds Act. This Committee also may not be aware that the D.C. Police Department supported removing discipline from collective bargaining, eliminating the 90-day statute of limitations on discipline, and allowing the police chief to increase proposed discipline.

I will close by discussing democracy or the lack thereof in D.C. The Revolutionary War was fought to give consent to the governed and end taxation without representation. Yet, D.C. residents cannot consent to any action taken by Congress, whether on local D.C.

or Federal matters, and they pay full Federal taxes while being denied voting representation in the Congress. If Republicans cared about D.C. or democracy instead of playing city council, this Committee today would be marking up the D.C. statehood bill, H.R. 51, the Washington D.C. Admission Act. Congress has the authority to admit the residential and commercial areas of D.C. as a state. It simply lacks the will. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back, and I want to publicly say again, after being mentioned by Representatives Lynch and Norton, that like President Trump, I strongly support the D.C. local government funds fix.

Does any other Member wish to speak on this bill?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none. The question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, the amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2096, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported.

Mr. LYNCH. I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 580, the Unfunded Mandates Accountability and Transparency Act of 2025. The clerk will please report.

#### **H.R. 580, THE UNFUNDED MANDATES ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT (UMATA)**

The Clerk. H.R. 580, the Unfunded Mandates Accountability and Transparency Act of 2025, a bill to amend the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 to provide for regulatory impact analysis for certain rules, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill should be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 580, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read. The substitute will be considered original text for the purposes of further amendment.



I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and the amendment.

I support H.R. 580, The Unfunded Mandates Accountability and Transparency Act. First introduced several Congresses ago and still very much needed, the bill strengthens Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 or UMRA. UMRA attempts to bring the flood of unfunded mandates issued to states, localities, and tribal governments by the Federal bureaucracy under control. It was later amended to help stem the flow of unusually costly mandates imposed upon the private sector, but unfortunately, Federal regulatory agencies have typically created the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act compliance as a box-checking exercise and not a true constraint on their activities. Thus, the flood of unfunded mandates has continued.

This was particularly true under the Biden-Harris Administration. Last Congress, the Committee received testimony that costs imposed by new Biden Administration regulations in 2021 and 2022 equaled \$10,000 per household. In all, the Biden-Harris Administration turned out nearly \$2 trillion in new regulatory burdens. Thankfully, the Unfunded Mandates Accountability and Transparency Act provides a solution. It increases earlier stakeholder engagement on rules that may impose costly mandate, better positioning stakeholders help agencies identify new ways to achieve goals at lower costs.

H.R. 580 requires agencies to prepare regulatory impact analysis, including analysis of cost benefits alternatives, disproportionate impacts, and effects on jobs. For major rules that mandate economic impacts of a \$100 million or more, present major increases in cost or prices, or have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, or market, it requires agencies to publish initial assessments in the Federal Register and receive public comment in response to noticed proposed rulemaking, and it requires final agency regulatory impact analysis to accompany notices of final rulemaking. These and other provisions in the bill ensure agencies will better analyze the potential cost of newly proposed mandates.

I want to thank Dr. Foxx for unwavering efforts over several congresses to enact this bill into law. Also, I want to thank Representatives Henry Cuellar and Jared Golden for their bipartisan co-sponsorship. I urge my colleagues to support this critical bipartisan reform bill. I now recognize Ranking Member Lynch for his statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Regulations have been a straw man for the Republicans to attack government agencies for years, yet the majority of Americans support government regulations across the range of industries. Regulations are what enable us to feel confident that the food we eat, the water we drink are safe for consumption. Regulations prevent fraudulent advertising and targeting children with products like tobacco and alcohol. They help protect the quality of the very air we breathe. Regulations have a profound effect on every aspect of our lives. They help keep our Nation safe, healthy, and prosperous.

I support improving transparency and public participation in the regulatory process, but that is not what this bill does. H.R. 580 will make this already complex regulatory process more burdensome

and give industry, which already has significant input in the regulatory process, even more power. In contrast, the Biden Administration worked to modernize the regulatory process, strengthening democracy by further advancing the transparency, inclusivity, and effectiveness of Federal regulations. The Biden Administration's modernization plans promoted both efficiency and fairness with the purpose of ensuring well-funded and well-connected corporations no longer have outsized influence on Federal regulations simply because they have the time, the resources, and the lobbyists to bombard Federal officials with input.

The changes implemented by the Biden Administration require Federal officials to proactively seek out the voices of those who are underrepresented but still critically affected by the rulemaking process, including people with disabilities and people living in rural areas as well as minority groups. This bill would overwhelm those underrepresented voices by giving special interests a megaphone in the regulatory process. This is not the way to increase public participation and reduce the opacity of regulatory process. It is, in fact, a way to increase the influence of special corporate interests.

Regulations are a tool for our democracy that serve the public good. Unfortunately, this bill would hinder, not improve, the ability of the public to be heard and represented. For that reason, I must oppose this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 580, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed?

Chairman COMER. Oh, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. Opposed, no?

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 580, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported.

Mr. LYNCH. I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 672, to establish new ZIP codes for certain communities and for other purposes.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 672, TO ESTABLISH NEW ZIP CODES FOR CERTAIN  
COMMUNITIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

The Clerk. H.R. 672 to establish new ZIP codes for certain communities and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 672, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purposes of further amendment.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for a statement on the bill and amendment.

H.R. 672 designates simple, unique ZIP codes for communities across the Nation. There are currently over 41,000 ZIP codes in the United States. In some cases, ZIP codes are misaligned with local boundaries. H.R. 672, which will create new ZIP codes for communities across the Nation is a product of various Members' advocacy, and I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record various letters of support from the local communities requesting the ZIP code designations in this bill.

Without objection, so ordered.

I now recognize Ranking Member Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. H.R. 672 would require the U.S. Postal Service to designate unique ZIP codes for a number of communities across the country. This bill aims to address certain issues related to economic development, and public safety regulations, and mail delivery. For example, Scotland, Connecticut is a town with only 625 households, and yet it is broken into six different ZIP codes. This causes significant issues for the Town of Scotland. For example, the town has reported numerous instances of delays and misdelivered mail and packages, including the delivery of absentee ballots in previous elections. The Town of Scotland had already sought assistance from the Postal Service, which operates a ZIP code boundary review process and even sent an appeal letter after it was denied. Scotland is one of those many communities who have experienced mail delivery disruptions from a ZIP code issue. This bill operates as a last resort for towns to get the resources and the attention they deserve.

I appreciate the diligence of Congressman Diaz-Balart, the Chair, and Committee staff in ensuring each town that is being marked up in today's amended version of this bill satisfies all of the Committee's requirements for consideration, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now in favor of reporting H.R. 672, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, say no.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, the bill is ordered favorably reported as amended.

And I request a recorded vote. As previously announced, further proceedings on the question will be postponed.

Our next item for consideration is H.R. 3095, to direct the United States Postal Service to designate single unique ZIP codes for certain communities, and for other purposes.

The clerk will please designate the bill.

**H.R. 3095, TO DIRECT THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE TO DESIGNATE SINGLE, UNIQUE ZIP CODES FOR CERTAIN COMMUNITIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

The Clerk. H.R. 3095 to direct the United States Postal Service to designate single unique ZIP codes for certain communities, and for other purposes.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the bill shall be considered as read and open for amendment at any point.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes himself to offer an amendment in the nature of substitute.

The clerk will please designate the amendment.

The Clerk. An amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 3095, as offered by Mr. Comer of Kentucky.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, the amendment is considered as read, and the substitute will be considered as original text for the purpose of further amendment.

I now recognize the sponsor of the bill who has worked very diligently on this, Representative Boebert from Colorado, for 5 minutes.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This bill means a lot to me and at least 65 other communities that are listed on my bill that we recognize, and this started in a little town in Westcliffe, Colorado. I represented Westcliffe, Colorado in the County of Custer in my first term, and one of the very first issues that I learned about there was their unique ZIP code denial. And it is something that I have promised that city, that community, that I would continue working on until I saw it resolved.

Now, while I continued working for the town of Westcliffe in Custer County, Colorado, I learned that this is an issue that we see all over the Nation, and, sorry, Westcliffe is the neighboring city, so Silver Cliff that got me started on this. But throughout the Nation, we have these communities who are stripped of their identity and so much more that I will go through in a moment, but this is a really large issue. And when cities petition the United States

Postal Service, they are often just blanketly denied, and it takes ten years for them to begin the appeals process.

So, I do want to rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 3095, to direct the United States Postal Service to designate single unique ZIP codes for certain communities and for other purposes. This commonsense, bipartisan bill directs the United States Postal Service to assign single unique ZIP codes to specific communities across the Nation, including 15 from my home state of Colorado. Too many towns and cities have gone far too long without a ZIP code of their own. This may sound like a minor inconvenience to some, but for the people living in these communities, it creates a very real and very frustrating problem.

The ZIP code system was introduced in the 1960's and has evolved far beyond its original purpose. While the Postal Service utilizes it for mail delivery, ZIP codes are also relied on by economic developers, insurers, and emergency personnel. When a community does not have its own ZIP code, it leads to serious logistical and financial challenges. For example, emergency responders can be dispatched to a wrong location, businesses suffer from lost deliveries. Residents are overcharged for insurance, and local governments miss out on critical sales tax revenues that, instead, get sent to neighboring jurisdictions. These are everyday frustrations that impact real people and hinder the ability of towns to serve their citizens effectively. This bill empowers communities to better meet the needs of their residents, strengthens local identity, and improves the operation of local government. A unique ZIP code can support infrastructure planning, reduce mail inconsistencies, and enhance overall efficiencies.

The current process for applying for a new ZIP code is broken. Petitions to the Postal Service are rarely approved, and if denied, they cannot appeal this decision for up to ten years, and that is strictly unacceptable, and I hope this legislation creates a new precedence within the United States Postal Service to change that timeframe. My bill offers a direct, practical solution. With H.R. 3095, we aim to help over 65 communities across our entire country finally resolve these long-standing problems, and this bill is supported by Republicans and Democrats, mayors, and town boards. These communities asked for help, and we are answering that call. To me, it is unfortunate that it takes an act of Congress to fix something like this within the United States Postal Service, but we are here to resolve this issue. I have heard of cities in Colorado, alone, that are losing approximately \$5 million in sales tax revenue annually, and this will be something that helps bring economic development and security.

Again, this is a bipartisan bill with 65 communities that are included, and I am excited to see this pass Committee today. I urge adoption of this bill, and join me in passing H.R. 3095 so that these communities get the recognition and services that they rightly deserve, and again, a shout-out to Silver Cliff, Colorado, who got me started on this wonderful mission. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields. Before I recognize Ranking Member Lynch, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the

record several letters from communities in support of Representative Boebert's H.R. 3095.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair now recognizes Ranking Member Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. H.R. 3095 would indeed require the U.S. Postal Service to designate unique ZIP codes for a number of communities across the country. This bill aims to address specific community concerns about disrupted mail delivery and undeliverable mail. While I also commend Representative Boebert for her work on this issue, I regrettably am unable to support this legislation at this current time for process reasons.

After numerous conversations between the Chair and the Ranking Member Connolly, the Committee agreed that ZIP code designation bills would be considered in a Committee markup if it passed the following checks. One, the designated locality identified in the bill must submit a letter from local leadership stating the reasons for the ZIP code change. Two, the community must also attest that they had petitioned the Postal Service for a unique ZIP code designation and was not successful. Three, the legislation must also include co-sponsors of all Members that would be impacted by the new ZIP code designation. Some localities included in this bill have three different Members of Congress overlapping a single community.

Unfortunately, Ms. Boebert's bill has not satisfied the Committee's requirements for consideration. I do wish the Chair had held this bill for future markup once it did satisfy all requirements for consideration. However, under these circumstances, I will oppose the passage of the bill today in its current form, and I thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. I recognize myself to speak on behalf of the bill.

The Postal Service structures the delivery of mail around ZIP codes, 5-digit numbers that organize how to deliver the mail. There are currently over 41,000 ZIP codes in the U.S. While ZIP codes are usually aligned with local boundaries, this is sometimes not the case. Representative Boebert's H.R. 3095 will create new ZIP codes for communities across the Nation, and it is the product of several Members' advocacy and Representative Boebert's leadership. I ask unanimous consent, and I have already entered in the letters, but she had many letters from many of the communities mentioned in the bill. I strongly encourage everyone to support the Boebert bill.

Do any other Members seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Seeing none, the question is now on the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 3095, as amended.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, say no.

[Chorus of noes.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported as amended.

Mr. LYNCH. I request a recorded vote.

Chairman COMER. A recorded vote is ordered. As previously announced, further proceedings of the question will be postponed.

Now, that got all the bills on the markup. Pursuant to the previous order, the Chair declares this Committee in recess, subject to the call of the Chair, at 1:30 for votes on all the bills. So, the Committee stands in recess until 1:30.

[Recess.]

Chairman COMER. The Committee will come to order.

The question is on favorably reporting H.R. 3490, the Gerald E. Connolly Esophageal Cancer Awareness Act, as amended. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 3490.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. I will give everyone a little extra time since this is the first vote. If anyone is having any issues with your voting machine, let us know. Voting device.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Okay. We have got Ms. Tlaib. I will wait for you, Ms. Tlaib. Any other—we have one en route, I am told. All right, Mr. Biggs. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 42. The nays are zero.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported, as amended.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2409. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 2409, the Guidance Clarity Act.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 23. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it. The bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 67. Members will record their vote using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 67, the Modernizing Retrospective Regulatory Review Act.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 24. The nays are 18.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 689. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 689, the Full Responsibility and Expedited Enforcement Act.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 23. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 884. Members will record their vote using electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 884, to prohibit individuals who are not citizens of the United States from voting in elections in the District of Columbia.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 25. The nays are 17.



Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 2096. Members will record their votes using electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 2096, the Protecting Our Nation's Capital Emergency Act.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 23. The nays are 18.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 580. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 580, the Unfunded Mandates Accountability and Transparency Act.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

One second, one second, one second. We got one person.

Now have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote total.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 23. The nays are 19.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 672. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 672.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote tally.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 42. The nays are 1.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

The question is now on favorably reporting H.R. 3095. Members will record their votes using the electronic voting system.

The clerk will now open the vote on favorably reporting H.R. 3095.

[Voting.]

Chairman COMER. Have all Members been recorded who wish to be recorded?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. Does any Member wish to change their vote?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The clerk will close the vote and report the vote tally.

The Clerk. Mr. Chairman, on this vote, the ayes are 22. The nays are 20.

Chairman COMER. The ayes have it, and the bill is ordered favorably reported.

Without objection, the motion to reconsider is laid on the table.

Pursuant to notice, I now call up the following en bloc postal naming bills which were distributed in advance on this markup, H.R.s 1008 and 1009.

#### **H.R. 1008, POSTAL NAMING BILL**

#### **H.R. 1009, POSTAL NAMING BILL**

Without objection, the bills are considered read.

If any Member would like to speak on any of the measures, they may do so now. Does any Member wish to speak? Ms. Stansbury from New Mexico.

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Chairman, because I was in the Rules Committee this morning, I did not have the opportunity to offer my condolences to the Ranking Member and his family and, of course, everyone who is grieving in Virginia and across the country. So, I just wanted to use this opportunity to thank Mr. Connolly, of course, in memoriam, for his incredible service and to offer my condolences to everyone who is grieving out there. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. Do any other Members seek recognition on the en bloc?

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. The question is now on favorably reporting the en bloc package.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. All those opposed, signify by saying no.

[No response.]

Chairman COMER. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The en bloc measures are favorably reported. The motion to reconsider is laid upon the table.

Pursuant to House Rule XI, Clause 2, I ask that Committee Members have the right to file with the clerk of the committee supplemental, additional, Minority, and dissenting views.

Without objection.

Additionally, the staff is authorized to make necessary technical performing changes to the Committee print, subject to the approval of minority.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chairman COMER. If there is no further business before the Committee—

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman COMER. Yes. Who? Okay. Mr. Mfume?

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman, it is not business, but rather in appreciation of his service, this Committee, going back for over 20 years. I know Mr. Lynch would join me in this, and other Members who served with Gerry, that we close respectfully with a moment of silence.

Chairman COMER. Absolutely.

[Moment of silence.]

Chairman COMER. Thank you, Mr. Mfume, and before we close, I will say, again, my colleagues in the Majority agree 100 percent, Mr. Connolly was a statesman, a great man, an honest man, a good man, an effective legislator. He will be dearly missed. He was a strong voice for his constituents and a very, very decent human being, so we miss him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. The staff and I know the colleagues in the Minority, we feel for you and just so sorry for your loss.

So, if there is no further discussion, the Committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:54 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

