

Statement of Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Full Committee Business Meeting
Tuesday, September 20, 2022

I thank Chairwoman Maloney for bringing these critical pieces of legislation to the Committee's attention today, including my bill the Chai Suthammanont Healthy Federal Workplaces Act of 2022 (H.R. 8466). H.R. 8466 seeks to require policies and procedures to better protect the health and safety of federal employees, contractors, and subcontractors during nationwide public health emergencies. I am also pleased to cosponsor H.R. 8861, the District of Columbia Home Rule Expansion Act. Del. Norton's bill would grant D.C. with authority, equal to that in which states and territories already exercise, over certain local governmental functions. I look forward to working with my colleagues to support the many important legislative efforts on today's agenda.

S. 1941, the Metropolitan Areas Protection and Standardization (MAPS) Act

The Standards for Delineating Core Based Statistical Areas' (Standards) purpose are to implement consistency, across the federal government, in how agencies use statistics classified by geographic area. While the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) intends for the Standards to be used solely for statistical purposes, federal agencies across the enterprise use these datasets to determine how they distribute services, benefits, and funding through federal programs. S. 1941, the Metropolitan Areas Protection and Standardization (MAPS) Act, aims to ensure future recommendations to update a set of standards consider the downstream consequences of that data shift – in terms of how it might affect families, businesses, and communities whose benefits are determined using that data.

S. 3510, the Disaster Resiliency Planning Act

In 2021, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on the efforts of federal agencies to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on federal property and assets. To better protect federal assets and taxpayer dollars in the face of the escalating frequency and severity of natural disasters, the GAO report recommended that OMB direct agencies to incorporate natural disaster risk information assessments into asset management investment decisions. S. 3510, the Disaster Resiliency Planning Act would direct OMB to establish guidance within 180 days of enactment for the incorporation of natural disaster resilience into the real property asset management and investment decisions of federal agencies. In addition, the bill would require agencies to incorporate their natural disaster risk information assessments into such investment decisions. Finally, the bill would require OMB to report to Congress on the guidance, and to later brief Congress on its implementation.

H.R. 8466, the Chai Suthammanont Healthy Federal Workplaces Act of 2022

I am proud to sponsor the Chai Suthammanont Healthy Federal Workplaces Act of 2022 along with Chairwoman Maloney and Rep. Shontel Brown.

My bill would require each agency to establish a plan containing procedures and policies to protect the safety of federal employees, contractors, and subcontractors physically present at any covered worksite during a nationwide public health emergency declared for an infectious disease, and to ensure continuity of operations. The plan must detail public health protocols that the agency will follow during such a declaration, including testing, identification and notification of individuals who may have been exposed, cleaning, occupancy limits, use of personal protective equipment, and protections for employees whose work requires them to travel off-site.

As the Chair of the Government Operations Subcommittee, I am dedicated to ensuring government transparency and improving both internal and external federal agency communications. That is why H.R. 8466 would require each agency to publish its plan on its website and communicate its plan to employees, contractors, and subcontractors. OMB would also make public links to each agency's plan centrally available on its website.

The bill directs each agencies' Office of the Inspector General to report on their affiliated agency's implementation of their public health emergency plan to Congress. H.R. 8466 would also direct GAO to issue a report on the lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic on improving health and safety at federal agencies during nationwide public health emergencies.

The Committee favorably reported an earlier iteration of this bill (H.R. 978) on May 13, 2021, that would require agencies to develop safety plans for workplace reentry that were specific to the coronavirus pandemic. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation that would require agencies to develop plans in preparation for any future nationwide public health emergency declaration for an infectious disease to protect the health of employees and contractors, and to ensure continuity of operations throughout the emergency.

H.R. 8665, the National Archives and Records Administration Modernization Act

H.R. 8665, the National Archives and Records Administration Modernization Act, would amend the U.S. Code to remove pronouns in references to the Archivist of the United States. As the current nominee for the Archivist position would be—if confirmed – the first Senate-confirmed woman to hold that role, I support this needed update.

H. Res. 1243, Of inquiry requesting the President transmit certain documents in his possession to the House of Representatives relating to the Biden family's international business schemes and related information

I condemn H. Res. 1243, Of Inquiry Requesting the President Transmit Certain Documents in His Possession to the House of Representatives Relating to the Biden Family's International Business Schemes and Related Information. This resolution is a nothing more than a continuation of the minority's conspiracy fever dreams.

H.R. 8861, the District of Columbia Home Rule Expansion Act

I am proud to cosponsor H.R. 8861, the District of Columbia Home Rule Expansion Act of 2022, which aims to eliminate the current and unnecessary congressional review period for D.C. legislation. It would give D.C. the authority to prosecute all D.C. crimes, and grant clemency for local jurisdiction crimes. This bill, which I wholeheartedly endorse, would also allow individuals to be treated as federal employees for purposes of employee benefits if they are employees of the U.S. Attorney for D.C.