

Representative Justin Amash (I-MI)
Member Day testimony for the record
House Committee on House Administration
November 21, 2019

Thank you Chairperson Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify about my bill, H.R. 3403, the Searchable Legislation Act.

Congress considers thousands of pieces of legislation each year, many of which amend existing law. When members of Congress and staff—or members of the public—read legislation, it is frequently not apparent how the legislation changes existing law, because congressional legislation is not required to show the context for the deletions and insertions it makes to existing law. I have introduced a separate bill to address this issue.

Current law also does not require legislation to be in a searchable electronic format. To be able to track changes between bills and existing law, it is necessary first to have text in a searchable, machine-readable format.

I have introduced H.R. 3403 to require every bill, resolution, and document produced by Congress to be created, transmitted, and published in a searchable electronic format, consistent with recommendations from a congressional data task force the bill codifies. These new standards will open up the legislative process by increasing access to congressional documents.

I am grateful for the work the Office of the Clerk, the Government Publishing Office (GPO), and the Bulk Data Task Force are already doing to modernize congressional data and convert our laws into the United States Legislative Markup (USLM) XML format. Congress must complete this work so that members, staff, and the public can easily access and understand proposals to change our laws.

Thank you again for having me here today. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you.