

103^D CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4081

To establish a Congressional Office for Public Opinion Research and Assessment.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 17, 1994

Mr. KLINK (for himself and Ms. MCKINNEY) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To establish a Congressional Office for Public Opinion Research and Assessment.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT.**

4 There is established in the Congress an office to be
5 known as the “Congressional Office for Public Opinion
6 Research and Assessment”, hereinafter in this Act re-
7 ferred to as the “Office”.

8 **SEC. 2. OFFICE AND GOVERNING BOARD.**

9 The Office will consist of a nonvoting Director and
10 a Board comprised of—

1 (1) 3 Members of the House of Representatives
2 designated by the majority leader of the House of
3 Representatives;

4 (2) 3 Members of the House of Representatives
5 designated by the minority leader of the House of
6 Representatives;

7 (3) 3 Senators designated by the majority
8 leader of the Senate; and

9 (4) 3 Senators designated by the minority
10 leader of the Senate.

11 Terms of Board members, methods of appointment, rota-
12 tion, filling vacancies, selection of a chairman or vice-
13 chairman, and authorizing meetings, documents, and ex-
14 penditures shall be similar to that of the Office of Tech-
15 nology Assessment. The Board is required to set out re-
16 search priorities and methods for choosing research topics.
17 Members may request the Office to perform research and
18 evaluations subject to rules set by the Board.

19 **SEC. 3. DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR.**

20 (a) DIRECTOR.—The Director of the Office shall be
21 appointed by the Board and shall serve for a term of 6
22 years unless sooner removed by the Board. The Director
23 shall receive basic pay at the rate provided for level III
24 of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5,
25 United States Code. In addition to the powers and duties

1 vested in the Director by this Act, the Director shall exer-
2 cise such powers and duties as may be delegated by the
3 Board.

4 (b) DEPUTY DIRECTOR.—The Director may appoint
5 with the approval of the Board, a Deputy Director who
6 shall perform such functions as the Director may prescribe
7 and who shall be Acting Director during the absence or
8 incapacity of the Director or in the event of a vacancy
9 in the office of Director. The Deputy Director shall receive
10 basic pay at the rate provided for level IV of the Executive
11 Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States
12 Code.

13 (c) LIMITATION.—Neither the Director nor the Dep-
14 uty Director shall engage in any other business, vocation,
15 or employment than that of serving as such Director or
16 Deputy Director, as the case may be; nor shall the Direc-
17 tor or Deputy Director, except with the approval of the
18 Board, hold any office in, or act in any capacity for, any
19 organization, agency, or institution with which the Office
20 makes any contract or other arrangement under this Act.

21 **SEC. 4. AUTHORITY.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Office shall have the author-
23 ity, within the limits of available appropriations, to do all
24 things necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act,
25 including but without being limited to the authority to—

1 (1) make full use of competent personnel and
2 organizations outside the Office, public or private,
3 and form special ad hoc task forces or make other
4 arrangements when appropriate; and

5 (2) enter into contracts or other arrangements
6 as may be necessary for the conduct of the work of
7 the Office with any agency or instrumentality of the
8 United States, with any State, territory, or posses-
9 sion or any political subdivision thereof, or with any
10 person, firm or association, corporation, or edu-
11 cational institution, accept and utilize the services of
12 voluntary and uncompensated personnel, acquire
13 property of all kinds necessary for or resulting from
14 the exercise of authority of this Act, and provide
15 such rules and regulations as it deems necessary
16 governing its operation and organization.

17 (b) PERSONNEL.—The Director shall, in accordance
18 with such policies as the Board shall prescribe, appoint
19 and fix the compensation of such personnel as may be nec-
20 essary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

21 **SEC. 5. ADVISORY COUNCIL.**

22 An Advisory Council will be established by the Board
23 consisting of individuals who are most knowledgeable of
24 the state-of-the-art of processes, methods, and needs for
25 informing Congress of the opinions and values of the pub-

1 lic. Membership, duties, provisions for chairman and vice-
2 chairman, terms, expense allowances and compensation
3 shall be similar to that of the Technology Assessment Ad-
4 visory Council of the Office of Technology Assessment.
5 The Council will advise the Board on research priorities
6 and methods which are the most promising and cost effec-
7 tive to pursue and keep itself informed on the state-of-
8 the-art of opinion research, including such developments
9 as interactive TV, electronic fora and town meetings, com-
10 puter network conferencing, and all methods for enhanc-
11 ing democracy in this and other countries.

12 **SEC. 6. EXPERT PANELS.**

13 An expert, ad hoc panel will be set up by the Director
14 for each survey to assist in the design and analysis. Mem-
15 bers of these panels will be experts in the issues of the
16 survey and represent a full range of scientific expertise,
17 approaches, and viewpoints on alternative courses for deal-
18 ing with the issue in its various aspects and including all
19 major policy alternatives. A report will be prepared in a
20 timely fashion at the conclusion of each survey including
21 a master questionnaire, containing the questions as asked
22 with frequencies or percentage responses, and an analysis
23 prepared by the advisory panel with the assistance of in-
24 house or contractor personnel.

1 **SEC. 7. PUBLIC RELEASE.**

2 The survey report and all other survey data (includ-
3 ing the methodology used and an analysis of the probable
4 accuracy and estimates of the probable errors both be-
5 cause of sampling error and all other causes) will be made
6 public in a timely manner to the news media and to orga-
7 nizations and individuals specializing in public policy or
8 public opinion. The other survey data will be available in
9 written form as a data book and in electronic form as com-
10 plete data discs readable by personal computers suitable
11 for statistical analysis in standard fashion and will be pro-
12 vided on request to anyone at a reasonable cost adequate
13 to cover the full marginal cost of production and distribu-
14 tion.

15 **SEC. 8. METHODOLOGY.**

16 The surveys will test the degree of public support for
17 alternative policy proposals when the survey respondents
18 are informed in a fair, balanced, and accurate manner
19 with relevant facts. The surveys will not only test support
20 for various policy proposals, but also seek to determine
21 how important various pieces of information, including
22 balanced sets of arguments for and against the proposal,
23 turn out to be in determining that support. Depending on
24 available funds to pay for the interviewing and analyzing
25 of statistically adequate oversamples, some surveys will
26 also endeavor to determine statistically significant dif-

1 ferences between the national sample and State or district
2 samples, particularly in those issue areas where particular
3 regions, States, or districts are expected to have different
4 opinions because of the nature of the issue.

5 **SEC. 9. METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The surveys will experiment with
7 innovative technology, hardware, and software, including
8 electronic media, digital and fiber optics networks, both
9 with independent telephone interviewing and supple-
10 mented by and in conjunction with face-to-face interview-
11 ing and television programming that attempts to create
12 the group interactivity, issue-defining, agenda-setting and
13 consensus-building of what has come to be called the elec-
14 tronic town meeting, as any of these techniques and meth-
15 odologies show promise of improving the ability of the Of-
16 fice to accomplish its purposes. The surveys will be de-
17 signed not only to obtain the policy views of the public
18 but also—

19 (1) to test various concepts about how best to
20 design, formulate, word, and include in the survey as
21 it is spoken, shown, or read by interviewers, whether
22 from CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Inter-
23 viewing) screens or by other means, the required fac-
24 tual information and pro and con arguments; and

1 (2) to determine the direction and degree to
2 which doing this in different ways affects the results
3 of the surveys.

4 (b) SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS RESEARCH.—Sensitivity
5 analysis research will also be performed which will deter-
6 mine the degree to which imbalance in the amount and
7 quality of factual information and in the bias created by
8 cuing and permission language affects survey data. Such
9 research shall be designed to lead to a better understand-
10 ing of the affects of question design, menu choices, and
11 implicit or unstated assumptions or survey researchers.

12 (c) INTERACTION TESTING.—Surveys will also test
13 the degree of interaction that works best—i.e., is most in-
14 formative of the public position—at different stages in the
15 designers' understanding of the public view in the issue.

16 **SEC. 10. APPROPRIATION FOR THE OFFICE AND PARTIAL**
17 **RESCISSION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR SEN-**
18 **ATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAIL**
19 **COSTS.**

20 (a) APPROPRIATION.—There is appropriated, out of
21 any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated,
22 \$10,000,000 for the Congressional Office for Public Opin-
23 ion Research and Assessment for fiscal year 1994.

24 (b) RESCISSIONS.—Of the funds appropriated in the
25 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1994, for the Sen-

1 ate under the heading “OFFICIAL MAIL COSTS”, there is
2 rescinded the sum of \$5,000,000. Of the funds appro-
3 priated in the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act,
4 1994, for the House of Representatives under the head-
5 ings “SALARIES AND EXPENSES” and “OFFICIAL MAIL
6 COSTS”, there is rescinded the sum of \$5,000,000.

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