

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3548

To enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style for Government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 17, 2007

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa (for himself, Mr. AKIN, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

To enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style for Government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes.

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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Plain Language in
5 Government Communications Act of 2007”.

1 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

2 The purpose of this Act is to improve the Federal
3 Government’s effectiveness and accountability to the pub-
4 lic by promoting clear communication that the public can
5 understand and use.

6 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **AGENCY.**—The term “agency” means an
9 Executive agency, as that term is defined in section
10 105 of title 5, United States Code.

11 (2) **PLAIN LANGUAGE.**—The term “plain lan-
12 guage” means language that the intended audience
13 can readily understand and use because it is clear,
14 concise, well-organized, and follows other best prac-
15 tices of plain language writing.

16 **SEC. 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES.**

17 (a) **REQUIREMENT TO USE PLAIN LANGUAGE IN**
18 **NEW DOCUMENTS.**—Within one year after the date of the
19 enactment of this Act, each agency—

20 (1) shall use plain language in any covered doc-
21 ument of the agency issued or substantially revised
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

23 (2) may use plain language in any revision of
24 a covered document issued on or before such date.

25 (b) **GUIDANCE.**—In implementing subsection (a), an
26 agency may follow either the guidance of the Plain English

1 Handbook, published by the Securities and Exchange
2 Commission, or the Federal Plain Language Guidelines.
3 If any agency has its own plain language guidance, the
4 agency may use that guidance, as long as it is consistent
5 with the Federal Plain Language Guidelines.

6 (c) COVERED DOCUMENT.—In this section, the term
7 “covered document”—

8 (1) means any document that explains how to
9 obtain a benefit or service or that is relevant to ob-
10 taining that benefit or service; and

11 (2) includes a letter, publication, form, notice,
12 or instruction but does not include a regulation.

13 **SEC. 5. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.**

14 (a) INITIAL REPORT.—Within six months after the
15 date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each agency
16 shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Govern-
17 ment Reform of the House of Representatives and the
18 Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-
19 fairs of the Senate a report that describes how the agency
20 intends to meet the following objectives:

21 (1) Communicating the requirements of this
22 Act to agency employees.

23 (2) Training agency employees to write in plain
24 language.

1 (3) Meeting the deadline set forth in section
2 4(a).

3 (4) Ensuring ongoing compliance with the re-
4 quirements of this Act.

5 (5) Designating a senior official to be respon-
6 sible for implementing the requirements of this Act.

7 (b) ANNUAL AND OTHER REPORTS.—The head of
8 each agency shall submit to the Committee on Oversight
9 and Government Reform of the House of Representatives
10 and the Committee on Homeland Security and Govern-
11 mental Affairs of the Senate a report on compliance with
12 this Act—

13 (1) annually for the first two years after the
14 date of the enactment of this Act; and

15 (2) once every three years thereafter.

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