

Calendar No. 582

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION**S. 1347****[Report No. 113-268]**

To provide transparency, accountability, and limitations of Government sponsored conferences.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 23, 2013

Mr. COBURN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. CHIESA, Mr. ENZI, and Ms. AYOTTE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

OCTOBER 1, 2014

Reported, under authority of the order of the Senate of September 18, 2014, by Mr. CARPER, with an amendment

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italie*]

A BILL

To provide transparency, accountability, and limitations of Government sponsored conferences.

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 “Conference Account-
5 ability Act of 2013”.

1 **SEC. 2. GOVERNMENT SPONSORED CONFERENCES.**

2 (a) TRAVEL EXPENSES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES RE-
3 LATING TO CONFERENCES.—

4 (1) LIMITATIONS AND REPORTS ON TRAVEL EX-
5 PENSES TO CONFERENCES.—Chapter 57 of title 5,
6 United States Code, is amended by adding at the
7 end the following:

8 **“§ 5712. Limitations and reports on travel expenses to**
9 **conferences**

10 “(a) In this section, the term—

11 “(1) ‘conference’ means a meeting that—

12 “(A) is held for consultation, education, or
13 discussion;

14 “(B) is not held entirely at an agency facil-
15 ity;

16 “(C) involves costs associated with travel
17 and lodging for some participants; and

18 “(D) is sponsored by 1 or more agencies,
19 1 or more organizations that are not agencies,
20 or a combination of such agencies or organiza-
21 tions; and

22 “(2) ‘international conference’ means a con-
23 ference attended by representatives of—

24 “(A) the United States Government; and

1 “(B) any foreign government, international
2 organization, or foreign nongovernmental orga-
3 nization.

4 “(b) No agency may pay the travel expenses for more
5 than 50 employees of that agency who are stationed in
6 the United States, for any international conference occur-
7 ring outside the United States, unless the Secretary of
8 State submits to Congress before the conference a written
9 certification that attendance for such employees is in the
10 national interest.

11 “(c) Not later than 30 days after the end of each
12 quarter of each fiscal year, each agency shall post on the
13 public Internet website of that agency a report on each
14 conference for which the agency paid travel expenses dur-
15 ing the preceding 3 months that includes—

16 “(1) the itemized expenses paid by the agency,
17 including travel expenses, the cost of scouting for
18 and selecting the location of the conference, and any
19 agency expenditures to otherwise support the con-
20 ference;

21 “(2) the primary sponsor of the conference;

22 “(3) the location of the conference;

23 “(4) in the case of a conference for which that
24 agency was the primary sponsor, a statement that—

25 “(A) justifies the location selected;

1 “(B) demonstrates the cost efficiency of
2 the location; and

3 “(C) provides a cost benefit analysis of
4 holding a conference rather than conducting a
5 teleconference;

6 “(5) the date of the conference;

7 “(6) an explanation how the conference ad-
8 vanced the mission of the agency;

9 “(7) the title and pay grade of any Federal em-
10 ployee or any individual who is not a Federal em-
11 ployee whose travel expenses or other conference ex-
12 penses were paid by the agency; and

13 “(8) the total number of individuals whose trav-
14 el expenses or other conference expenses were paid
15 by the agency.

16 “(d) Each report posted on the public Internet
17 website under subsection (e) shall—

18 “(1) be in a searchable electronic format; and

19 “(2) remain on that website for at least 5 years
20 after the date of posting.”.

21 (2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMEND-
22 MENT.—The table of sections for chapter 57 of title
23 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after
24 the item relating to section 5711 the following:

“5712. Limitations and reports on travel expenses to conferences.”.

25 (b) LIMITATIONS ON ANNUAL TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of each of fiscal
 2 years 2014 through 2018, an agency (as defined
 3 under section 5701(1) of title 5, United States
 4 Code) may not make, or obligate to make, expendi-
 5 tures for travel expenses, in an aggregate amount
 6 greater than 80 percent of the aggregate amount of
 7 such expenses for fiscal year 2010.

8 (2) IDENTIFICATION OF TRAVEL EXPENSES.—
 9 Not later than September 1, 2013, and after con-
 10 sultation with the Administrator of General Services
 11 and the Director of the Administrative Office of the
 12 United States Courts, the Director of the Office of
 13 Management and Budget shall establish guidelines
 14 for the determination of what expenses constitute
 15 travel expenses for purposes of this subsection. The
 16 guidelines shall identify specific expenses, and class-
 17 es of expenses, that are to be treated as travel ex-
 18 penses.

19 (c) CONFERENCE TRANSPARENCY AND LIMITA-
 20 TIONS.—

21 (1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection—

22 (A) the term “agency” has the meaning
 23 given under section 5701(1) of title 5, United
 24 States Code; and

1 (B) the term “conference” has the mean-
2 ing given under section 5712(a)(1) of title 5,
3 United States Code (as added by subsection
4 (a)).

5 (2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF CONFERENCE MA-
6 TERIALS.—Each agency shall post on the public
7 Internet website of that agency detailed information
8 on any presentation made by any employee of that
9 agency at a conference, including—

10 (A) any minutes relating to the presen-
11 tation;

12 (B) any speech delivered;

13 (C) any visual exhibit, including photo-
14 graphs or slides;

15 (D) any video, digital, or audio recordings
16 of the conference; and

17 (E) information regarding any financial
18 support or other assistance from a foundation
19 or other non-Federal source used to pay or de-
20 fray the costs of the conference, which shall in-
21 clude a certification by the head of the agency
22 that there is no conflict of interest resulting
23 from the support received from each such
24 source.

1 (3) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT EXPENDED ON A
2 CONFERENCE.—

3 (A) IN GENERAL.—No agency may expend
4 more than \$500,000 to support a single con-
5 ference.

6 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in
7 this paragraph shall be construed to preclude
8 an agency from receiving financial support or
9 other assistance from a foundation or other
10 non-Federal source to pay or defray the costs of
11 a conference the total cost of which exceeds
12 \$500,000.

13 (4) LIMITATION ON THE ANNUAL NUMBER OF
14 CONFERENCES AN AGENCY MAY SUPPORT.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—An agency may expend
16 funds on not more than 1 conference that is
17 sponsored or organized by a particular organi-
18 zation during any fiscal year, unless the agency
19 is the primary sponsor and organizer of the
20 conference.

21 (B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in
22 this paragraph shall be construed to preclude
23 an agency from paying travel expenses for an
24 employee of that agency to attend a conference.

1 ~~(5) LIMITATION ON CONFERENCE POLICIES.—~~
 2 An agency may not establish or implement a policy
 3 that discourages or prohibits the selection of a loca-
 4 tion for travel, an event, a meeting, or a conference
 5 because the location is perceived to be a resort or va-
 6 cation destination.

7 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

8 *This Act may be cited as the “Conference Account-*
 9 *ability Act of 2014”.*

10 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

11 *In this Act—*

12 (1) *the term “agency” has the meaning given*
 13 *that term under section 5701(1) of title 5, United*
 14 *States Code; and*

15 (2) *the term “conference” means a meeting, re-*
 16 *treat, seminar, symposium, or event that involves*
 17 *attendee travel.*

18 **SEC. 3. GOVERNMENT SPONSORED CONFERENCES.**

19 (a) *EXPENSES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES RELATING TO*
 20 *CONFERENCES.—*

21 (1) *LIMITATIONS AND REPORTS ON CONFERENCE*
 22 *EXPENSES.—Subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5,*
 23 *United States Code, is amended by adding at the end*
 24 *the following:*

1 **“§5712. Limitations and reports on conference ex-**
2 **penses**

3 “(a) *In this section, the term ‘conference’ means a*
4 *meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that in-*
5 *volves attendee travel.*

6 “(b) *No agency may pay the travel expenses for more*
7 *than 50 employees of that agency who are stationed in the*
8 *United States, for any conference occurring outside the*
9 *United States, unless the Deputy Secretary (or the equiva-*
10 *lent) and the Chief Financial Officer of the agency submit*
11 *to Congress before the conference a written certification that*
12 *attendance for such employees is in the national interest.*

13 “(c) *Not later than 30 days after the end of each quar-*
14 *ter of each fiscal year, each agency shall post on the public*
15 *Internet website of the agency a report on each conference*
16 *that was held during the preceding 3 months for which the*
17 *agency expended more than \$50,000 that includes—*

18 “(1) *the itemized expenses paid by the agency,*
19 *including travel expenses, the cost of scouting for and*
20 *selecting the location of the conference, and any agen-*
21 *cy expenditures to otherwise support the conference;*

22 “(2) *the primary sponsor of the conference;*

23 “(3) *the location of the conference;*

24 “(4) *in the case of a conference for which the*
25 *agency was the primary sponsor, a statement that—*

26 “(A) *justifies the location selected;*

1 “(B) demonstrates the cost efficiency of the
2 location; and

3 “(C) provides a cost benefit analysis of
4 holding a conference rather than conducting a
5 teleconference, video conference, video training,
6 or other means of remote communication;

7 “(5) the dates of the conference;

8 “(6) an explanation of how the conference ad-
9 vanced the mission of the agency;

10 “(7) the pay grade of any Federal employee or
11 any individual who is not a Federal employee whose
12 travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid
13 by the agency;

14 “(8) the total number of individuals whose travel
15 expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the
16 agency;

17 “(9) detailed information on any presentation
18 made by a Federal employee at the conference, includ-
19 ing any speech, visual exhibit, photograph, slide, or
20 video, digital, or audio recording; and

21 “(10) information regarding any financial sup-
22 port or other assistance from a foundation or other
23 non-Federal source used to pay or defray the costs of
24 the conference, which shall include a certification that

1 *there is no conflict of interest resulting from the sup-*
2 *port received from each such source.*

3 “(d) *Each report posted on the public Internet website*
4 *under subsection (c)—*

5 “(1) *shall—*

6 “(A) *be in a searchable electronic format;*

7 *and*

8 “(B) *remain on the website for not less than*
9 *5 years after the date of posting; and*

10 “(2) *shall not include—*

11 “(A) *information regarding travel or con-*
12 *ference expenses involving military combat, the*
13 *training or deployment of members of the Armed*
14 *Forces, or other similar expenses, as determined*
15 *by the Director of the Office of Management and*
16 *Budget in consultation with the Administrator of*
17 *General Services; or*

18 “(B) *scientific or medical research presented*
19 *by a Federal employee at a conference that was*
20 *previously unpublished.*

21 “(e) *The head of an agency may exclude certain infor-*
22 *mation, expenses, and materials from a report required*
23 *under subsection (c) only if the head of the agency deter-*
24 *mines that the inclusion of such information would under-*
25 *mine national security, international diplomacy, health*

1 *and safety inspections, law enforcement, or site visits re-*
2 *quired for oversight or investigatory purposes.”.*

3 (2) *TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMEND-*
4 *MENT.—The table of sections for chapter 57 of title 5,*
5 *United States Code, is amended by inserting after the*
6 *item relating to section 5711 the following:*

“5712. Limitations and reports on conference expenses.”.

7 (b) *CONFERENCE LIMITATIONS.—*

8 (1) *LIMITATION ON AMOUNT EXPENDED ON A*
9 *CONFERENCE.—*

10 (A) *IN GENERAL.—No agency may expend*
11 *more than \$500,000 to support a single con-*
12 *ference, unless the head of the agency and the*
13 *Chief Financial Officer of the agency submit to*
14 *Congress before the conference a written certifi-*
15 *cation that the conference is in the national in-*
16 *terest, which shall include—*

17 (i) *an estimate of the total cost of the*
18 *conference;*

19 (ii) *the dates of the conference;*

20 (iii) *an estimate of the number of full-*
21 *time equivalent employees attending the*
22 *conference;*

23 (iv) *any costs associated with planning*
24 *for the conference; and*

1 (v) an explanation of how the con-
2 ference advances the mission of the agency.

3 (B) *RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.*—Nothing in
4 this paragraph shall be construed to preclude an
5 agency from receiving financial support or other
6 assistance from a foundation or other non-Fed-
7 eral source to pay or defray the costs of a con-
8 ference.

9 (2) *LIMITATION ON CONFERENCE POLICIES.*—An
10 agency may not establish or implement a policy that
11 discourages or prohibits the selection of a location for
12 travel, an event, a meeting, or a conference because
13 the location is perceived to be a resort or vacation
14 destination.

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