

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6689

To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify the provisions of that title relating to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 1, 2020

Ms. PORTER (for herself, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. NADLER, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. TAKANO, and Mr. SCHIFF) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Reform

A BILL

To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify the provisions of that title relating to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 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 “Accountability for Act-
5 ing Officials Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CLARIFICATION OF FEDERAL VACANCIES REFORM**
2 **ACT OF 1998.**

3 (a) **FIRST ASSISTANT REQUIREMENTS.**—Section
4 3345 of title 5, United States Code, is amended as follows:

5 (1) In subsection (a)—

6 (A) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end
7 before the semi-colon the following: “, but, and
8 except as provided in subsection (e), only if the
9 individual serving in the position of first assist-
10 ant has occupied such position for a period of
11 at least 30 days during the 365-day period pre-
12 ceding the date of the death, resignation, or be-
13 ginning of inability to serve”; and

14 (B) by striking subparagraph (A) of para-
15 graph (3) and inserting the following:

16 “(A) the officer or employee served in a
17 position in such agency for a period of at least
18 1 year preceding the date of death, resignation,
19 or beginning of inability to serve of the applica-
20 ble officer; and”.

21 (2) By adding at the end the following:

22 “(d) For purposes of this section, a position shall be
23 considered to be the first assistant to the office with re-
24 spect to which a vacancy occurs only if such position has
25 been designated, at least 30 days before the date of the
26 vacancy, by law, rule, or regulation as the first assistant

1 position. The previous sentence shall begin to apply on the
2 date that is 180 days after the date of enactment of the
3 Accountability for Acting Officials Act.

4 “(e) The 30-day service requirement in subsection
5 (a)(1) shall not apply to any individual who is a first as-
6 sistant if—

7 “(1) the office of such first assistant is an of-
8 fice for which appointment is required to be made by
9 the President, by and with the advice and consent
10 of the Senate; and

11 “(2) the Senate has approved the appointment
12 of such individual to such office.”.

13 (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—Section 3345(b) of title 5,
14 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
15 following:

16 “(3) Any individual directed to perform the functions
17 and duties of the vacant office temporarily in an acting
18 capacity under subsection (a)(2) or (f) shall possess the
19 qualifications (if any) set forth in law, rule, or regulation
20 that are otherwise applicable to an individual appointed
21 by the President, by and with the advice and consent of
22 the Senate, to occupy such office.”.

23 (c) APPLICATION TO INDIVIDUALS REMOVED FROM
24 OFFICE.—Paragraph (2) of section 3345(c) of title 5,
25 United States Code, is amended by inserting after “the

1 expiration of a term of office” the following: “or removal
2 (voluntarily or involuntarily) from office”.

3 (d) VACANCY OF INSPECTOR GENERAL POSITIONS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3345 of title 5,
5 United States Code, as amended by subsection
6 (a)(2), is further amended by adding at the end the
7 following:

8 “(f)(1) Notwithstanding subsection (a), if an Inspec-
9 tor General position that requires appointment by the
10 President by and with the advice and consent of the Sen-
11 ate to be filled is vacant, the first assistant (if any) of
12 such position shall serve as the acting Inspector General.

13 “(2) Notwithstanding subsection (a), if for purposes
14 of carrying out paragraph (1) of this subsection there is
15 no first assistant, an acting Inspector General shall be ap-
16 pointed by the President from among individuals serving
17 in an office of any Inspector General who occupy a posi-
18 tion at the Senior Executive Service level or higher.”.

19 (2) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by
20 paragraph (1) shall apply to any vacancy first occur-
21 ring with respect to an Inspector General position on
22 or after the date of enactment of this Act.

23 (e) TESTIMONY OF ACTING OFFICIALS BEFORE CON-
24 GRESS.—Section 3345 of title 5, United States Code, as

1 amended by subsection (d)(1), is further amended by add-
2 ing at the end the following:

3 “(g)(1) Any individual serving as an acting officer
4 due to a vacancy to which this section applies, or any indi-
5 vidual who has served in such capacity and continues to
6 perform the same or similar duties beyond the time limits
7 described in section 3346, shall appear, at least once dur-
8 ing any 60-day period that the individual is so serving,
9 before the appropriate committees of jurisdiction of the
10 House of Representatives and the Senate.

11 “(2) Paragraph (1) may be waived upon mutual
12 agreement of the chairs and ranking members of such
13 committees.”.

14 (f) TIME LIMITATION FOR PRINCIPAL OFFICERS.—
15 Section 3346 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

16 (1) in subsection (a), by inserting “or as pro-
17 vided in subsection (d)” after “sickness”; and

18 (2) by adding at the end the following:

19 “(d) With respect to the vacancy of the position of
20 head of any agency listed in subsection (b) of section 901
21 of title 31, or any other position that is within the Presi-
22 dent’s cabinet and to which this section applies, sub-
23 sections (a) through (c) of this section and sections
24 3348(c), 3349(b), and 3349a(b) shall be applied by sub-
25 stituting ‘120’ for ‘210’ in each instance.”.

1 (g) EXCLUSIVITY.—Section 3347 of title 5, United
2 States Code, is amended—

3 (1) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
4 section (c); and

5 (2) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
6 lowing:

7 “(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a), any statutory
8 provision covered under paragraph (1) of such subsection
9 that contains a non-discretionary order or directive to des-
10 ignate an officer or employee to perform the functions and
11 duties of a specified office temporarily in an acting capac-
12 ity shall be the exclusive means for temporarily author-
13 izing an acting official to perform the functions and duties
14 of such office.”.

15 (h) REPORTING OF VACANCIES.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3349 of title 5,
17 United States Code, is amended—

18 (A) in subsection (a)—

19 (i) by striking “immediately upon” in
20 each instance and inserting “not later than
21 7 days after”;

22 (ii) in paragraph (3), by striking
23 “and” at the end;

1 (iii) in paragraph (4), by striking the
2 period at the end and inserting “; and”;
3 and

4 (iv) by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing:

6 “(5) notification of the end of the term of serv-
7 ice of any person serving in an acting capacity and
8 the name of any subsequent person serving in an
9 acting capacity and the date the service of such sub-
10 sequent person began not later than 7 days after
11 such date.”; and

12 (B) in subsection (b), by striking “imme-
13 diately” and inserting “not later than 14 days
14 after the date of such determination”.

15 (2) TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.—Paragraphs
16 (1) and (2) of subsection (b) of such section 3349
17 are amended to read as follows:

18 “(1) the Committee on Homeland Security and
19 Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

20 “(2) the Committee on Oversight and Reform
21 of the House of Representatives;”.

22 (i) VACANCIES DURING PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL
23 TRANSITIONS.—Subsection (b) of section 3349a of title 5,
24 United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

1 “(b) Notwithstanding section 3346 (except as pro-
2 vided in paragraph (2) of this subsection) or 3348(c), with
3 respect to any vacancy that exists on a transitional inau-
4 guration day, or that arises during the 60-day period be-
5 ginning on such day, the person serving as an acting offi-
6 cer as described under section 3345 may serve in the of-
7 fice—

8 “(1) for no longer than 300 days beginning on
9 such day; or

10 “(2) subject to subsection 3346(b), once a first
11 or second nomination for the office is submitted to
12 the Senate, from the date of such nomination for the
13 period that the nomination is pending in the Sen-
14 ate.”.

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