



March 16, 2021

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

From: Thomas Aiello, Director of Federal Affairs, National Taxpayers Union

Re: NTU's views on March 17, 2021 Committee Markup

On behalf of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), the nation's oldest taxpayer advocacy organization, I write to express our views on several measures slated for consideration before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on March 17, 2021. NTU applauds the Committee for your continued efforts to advance legislation that improves government efficiency and spends taxpayer dollars more effectively.

S. 272, Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act of 2021. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Peters, Portman, Carper, Cornyn, and Ernst would improve transparency of federal agencies. Specifically, this bill would create a centralized hub for the hundreds of annual budget justifications, allowing taxpayers to better understand how the federal government is spending their tax dollars. This bill presents an excellent opportunity for increased transparency in the budget process, allowing insight into agency spending priorities for the coming fiscal year. Taxpayers deserve to know where and how their money is being spent, and this bill provides an excellent vehicle to make accessible that data. This bill would be a win for taxpayers by ensuring the availability of public finances data that should have been easily accessible long ago.

NTU supports S. 272.

S. 583, Promoting Rigorous and Innovative Cost Efficiencies for Federal Procurement and Acquisitions (PRICE) Act of 2021. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Peters, Ernst, Carper and Collins directs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to publish an annual report on projects that have used innovative procurement techniques within DHS to accomplish specific goals. Such goals listed are improving or encouraging better competition; reducing time to award; achieving cost savings; achieving better mission outcomes; meeting the goals for contracts awarded to small business concerns, among others. We believe the reforms in this legislation will better serve the public and taxpayers.

NTU supports S. 583.

S. 693, No Congressionally-Obligated Recurring Revenue Used as Pensions To Incarcerated Officials Now (No CORRUPTION) Act. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Rosen and Rick Scott closes a loophole that permits members of Congress convicted of a crime to still collect a taxpayer-funded pension. Currently under federal law, members of Congress who are convicted of a crime are still entitled to collect a taxpayer-funded pension up until their day of sentencing. This means that after a lawful conviction for corruption, members can go on to receive their taxpayer-funded pensions for years, even while in prison, by filing one appeal after another.

Thankfully, S. 3332 would close this loophole. It would update the law to immediately halt any federal pension payment to a member of Congress following a lawful conviction. If the conviction is overturned on appeal, the member would continue to receive their pension as normal and would also be eligible to receive any retroactive payments for which they would have been eligible. Enacting this legislation will send a clear message that no individual, regardless of their position of power, is above the law and immune from consequences.

NTU strongly supports S. 693.

S. 636, Billion Dollar Boondoggle Act of 2021. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Ernst, Peters, Braun, Lankford, and Scott is a commonsense way to enhance Congressional oversight of over-budget and behind-schedule projects. Specifically, this legislation requires the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to submit an annual report listing every project that is \$1 billion or more over budget or five years or more behind schedule. When tax dollars are used to fund projects, taxpayers should expect these dollars to be used effectively and not squandered on projects that are clearly wasteful. Congress can and should expose which projects waste the most money, and this legislation would help highlight high levels of wasteful spending.

NTU supports S. 636.

S. 522, Providing Accountability Through Transparency Act of 2021. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Lankford, Sinema, Risch, and Johnson would make the regulatory process more transparent and make regulations much easier to understand for the general public. Specifically, this legislation would require federal agencies submitting proposed rules “to include a link to a 100-word plain language summary of the proposed rule.” It’s a small and simple fix, but one that would better connect agencies and their missions to the citizens they work for.

NTU supports S. 522.

Duplication Scoring Act of 2021. This legislation would require the analysis of certain legislation for the purpose of preventing duplication of and overlap with existing government programs. Importantly, this bill would provide much-needed information to Congress and to the American people before Congress passes bills that do things that already exist. This legislation is common sense, as it provides lawmakers more information on whether a program already exists before they pass a bill with new authorizations. Additionally, with more information available to lawmakers, it could hasten reforms and consolidations to existing federal programs.

NTU supports the Duplication Scoring Act.

NTU appreciates the Committee’s consideration of our views and looks forward to working with you as you work on a bipartisan basis to improve the effectiveness of our government.