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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
Expected at 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, July 24, 1980

Statement of
Morton A. Myers
Director, Program Analysis Division
Before the
Subcommittee on Legislation and National Security
House Committee on Government Operations
on

[H.R. 6686, The Congressional Reports
Elimination Act of 1980]



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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss H.R. 6686, the proposed Congressional Reports Elimination Act of 1980. This bill would eliminate and/or modify some 235 mandated reporting requirements, thereby decreasing the workload and cost of government operations. Report reduction has been and continues to be an important area of concern to the General Accounting Office. Accordingly, we strongly support efforts directed at reducing unnecessary paperwork in the Federal Government and endorse the enactment of H.R. 6686.

As you know, this bill is a culmination of several years of effort on the part of the Congress (specifically this committee), the Executive, and the GAO. Its history dates back to the early 1970's when this committee requested the GAO to study the area of reports reduction.

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The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 assigned to the Comptroller General direct responsibility for monitoring the various reporting requirements of the Congress and for recommending the elimination of any duplicative or unneeded reporting. To date, we have compiled a comprehensive inventory of reporting requirements; we have conducted surveys of congressional committees to identify reporting reduction opportunities; and we have made the results of the inventory and surveys available to the Congress.

Generally, our work shows that the number of reporting requirements has grown dramatically over the past several decades. At the present time, there are approximately 2,300 congressionally mandated recurring reporting requirements. This number has been growing at the rate of several hundred requirements during each of several recent sessions of Congress. On the other hand, with respect to the elimination of unneeded or duplicative reporting requirements, success has been very modest. The net result has been an increase in the number of recurring reporting requirements each year.

H.R. 6686, if passed, would alter this trend. Specifically, the number of requirements cited for elimination in H.R. 6686 represents approximately 10 percent of the existing universe of recurring reporting requirements. In our view a very thorough job has been done by GAO and the committee staff to clear each of the cited eliminations with committees of legislative jurisdiction. Clearly, the passage of this Act would represent a step forward in the area of paperwork reduction.

We believe that the utility of current reports should be monitored and evaluated. We believe that unneeded reports should be eliminated. Most importantly, we believe that the value of reporting requirements should be assessed during the legislative initiation and reauthorization processes. That is, drafters of legislation should compare the potential benefit of a reporting requirement with the increased paperwork and the related cost that would be generated by the requirement. We have some ideas as to how this can be done. We are currently in the process of doing a study on recurring reporting requirements and their associated trends over the past few years. In this study, we shall communicate our ideas on how to address the requirements in the legislative drafting and reauthorization stages. For instance, we plan to discuss: (1) the relevancy of existing requirements as well as to what degree agencies' reports address and/or conform to legislative requirements; and (2) to what degree congressional committees rely upon information contained in these reports with respect to their decisionmaking activities as they relate to the congressional budget and oversight processes.

Again, we strongly support this bill and urge its passage. We continue to share your interest in reducing unnecessary paperwork. We believe that passage of this legislation will demonstrate the continued interest in reducing paperwork and the reporting burden on Federal agencies.

This concludes my prepared statement. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thursday, July 24, 1980

NOTICE OF HEARING:

COMMITTEE : Subcommittee on Legislation
and National Security
House Government Operations Committee

SUBJECT : Reports Elimination Act

TIME & DATE : 9:30 a.m. - July 24, 1980
ROOM : 2154 Rayburn House Office Building

MEMBERSHIP : Jack Brooks (D. Tex.), Chairman

Majority : Representatives Fuqua (Fla.), Moorhead
(Pa.), Fасcell (Fla.), St Germain
(R.I.), Levitas (Ga.)

Minority : Representatives Horton (N.Y.), Erlenborn
(Ill.), and Stangeland (Minn.)

PRINCIPAL STAFF : Cynthia Meadow, Professional Staff Member

GAO WITNESS : Morton A. Myers, Director,
Program Analysis Division

ACCOMPANIED BY : John Luke, Group Director, PAD

CAR WILL LEAVE G ST., 1st
BASEMENT AT 9:10 A.M.
(Car reserved in Mr. Myers' name)


M. Thomas Hagenstad
Legislative Adviser
Office of Congressional Relations