

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3279

To amend titles 5 and 28, United States Code, to require annual reports to Congress on, and the maintenance of databases on, awards of fees and other expenses to prevailing parties in certain administrative proceedings and court cases to which the United States is a party, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2015

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia (for himself, Mr. COHEN, Mrs. LUMMIS, Mr. SCHRAMMER, Mr. GOSAR, and Mr. PETERSON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend titles 5 and 28, United States Code, to require annual reports to Congress on, and the maintenance of databases on, awards of fees and other expenses to prevailing parties in certain administrative proceedings and court cases to which the United States is a party, 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 “Open Book on Equal
5 Access to Justice Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE**
2 **PROVISIONS.**

3 (a) AGENCY PROCEEDINGS.—Section 504 of title 5,
4 United States Code, is amended—

5 (1) in subsection (c)(1), by striking “, United
6 States Code”;

7 (2) by redesignating subsection (f) as sub-
8 section (i); and

9 (3) by striking subsection (e) and inserting the
10 following:

11 “(e)(1) The Chairman of the Administrative Con-
12 ference of the United States, after consultation with the
13 Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Admin-
14 istration, shall report to the Congress, not later than
15 March 31 of each year, on the amount of fees and other
16 expenses awarded during the preceding fiscal year pursu-
17 ant to this section. The report shall describe the number,
18 nature, and amount of the awards, the claims involved in
19 the controversy, and any other relevant information that
20 may aid the Congress in evaluating the scope and impact
21 of such awards. The report shall be made available to the
22 public online.

23 “(2)(A) The report required by paragraph (1) shall
24 account for all payments of fees and other expenses
25 awarded under this section that are made pursuant to a
26 settlement agreement, regardless of whether the settle-

1 ment agreement is sealed or otherwise subject to non-
2 disclosure provisions.

3 “(B) The disclosure of fees and other expenses re-
4 quired under subparagraph (A) does not affect any other
5 information that is subject to nondisclosure provisions in
6 the settlement agreement.

7 “(f) The Chairman of the Administrative Conference
8 shall create and maintain online a searchable database
9 containing the following information with respect to each
10 award of fees and other expenses under this section:

11 “(1) The case name and number of the adver-
12 sary adjudication, if available.

13 “(2) The name of the agency involved in the
14 adversary adjudication.

15 “(3) A description of the claims in the adver-
16 sary adjudication.

17 “(4) The name of each party to whom the
18 award was made, as such party is identified in the
19 order or other agency document making the award.

20 “(5) The amount of the award.

21 “(6) The basis for the finding that the position
22 of the agency concerned was not substantially justi-
23 fied.

1 “(g) The online searchable database described in sub-
2 section (f) may not reveal any information the disclosure
3 of which is prohibited by law or court order.

4 “(h) The head of each agency shall provide to the
5 Chairman of the Administrative Conference in a timely
6 manner all information requested by the Chairman to
7 comply with the requirements of subsections (e), (f), and
8 (g).”.

9 (b) COURT CASES.—Section 2412(d) of title 28,
10 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
11 following:

12 “(5)(A) The Chairman of the Administrative Con-
13 ference of the United States shall submit to the Congress,
14 not later than March 31 of each year, a report on the
15 amount of fees and other expenses awarded during the
16 preceding fiscal year pursuant to this subsection. The re-
17 port shall describe the number, nature, and amount of the
18 awards, the claims involved in each controversy, and any
19 other relevant information that may aid the Congress in
20 evaluating the scope and impact of such awards. The re-
21 port shall be made available to the public online.

22 “(B)(i) The report required by subparagraph (A)
23 shall account for all payments of fees and other expenses
24 awarded under this subsection that are made pursuant to
25 a settlement agreement, regardless of whether the settle-

1 ment agreement is sealed or otherwise subject to non-
2 disclosure provisions.

3 “(ii) The disclosure of fees and other expenses re-
4 quired under clause (i) does not affect any other informa-
5 tion that is subject to nondisclosure provisions in the set-
6 tlement agreement.

7 “(C) The Chairman of the Administrative Conference
8 shall include and clearly identify in the annual report
9 under subparagraph (A), for each case in which an award
10 of fees and other expenses is included in the report—

11 “(i) any amounts paid from section 1304 of
12 title 31 for a judgment in the case;

13 “(ii) the amount of the award of fees and other
14 expenses; and

15 “(iii) the statute under which the plaintiff filed
16 suit.

17 “(6) The Chairman of the Administrative Conference
18 shall create and maintain online a searchable database
19 containing the following information with respect to each
20 award of fees and other expenses under this subsection:

21 “(A) The case name and number.

22 “(B) The name of the agency involved in the
23 case.

1 “(C) The name of each party to whom the
2 award was made, as such party is identified in the
3 order or other court document making the award.

4 “(D) A description of the claims in the case.

5 “(E) The amount of the award.

6 “(F) The basis for the finding that the position
7 of the agency concerned was not substantially justi-
8 fied.

9 “(7) The online searchable database described in
10 paragraph (6) may not reveal any information the disclo-
11 sure of which is prohibited by law or court order.

12 “(8) The head of each agency (including the Attorney
13 General of the United States) shall provide to the Chair-
14 man of the Administrative Conference of the United
15 States in a timely manner all information requested by
16 the Chairman to comply with the requirements of para-
17 graphs (5), (6), and (7).”.

18 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—Section 2412 of title
19 28, United States Code, is amended—

20 (1) in subsection (d)(3), by striking “United
21 States Code,”; and

22 (2) in subsection (e)—

23 (A) by striking “of section 2412 of title
24 28, United States Code,” and inserting “of this
25 section”; and

1 (B) by striking “of such title” and insert-
2 ing “of this title”.

3 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by
5 subsections (a) and (b) shall first apply with respect
6 to awards of fees and other expenses that are made
7 on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

8 (2) INITIAL REPORTS.—The first reports re-
9 quired by section 504(e) of title 5, United States
10 Code, and section 2412(d)(5) of title 28, United
11 States Code, shall be submitted not later than
12 March 31 of the calendar year following the first
13 calendar year in which a fiscal year begins after the
14 date of the enactment of this Act.

15 (3) ONLINE DATABASES.—The online databases
16 required by section 504(f) of title 5, United States
17 Code, and section 2412(d)(6) of title 28, United
18 States Code, shall be established as soon as prac-
19 ticable after the date of the enactment of this Act,
20 but in no case later than the date on which the first
21 reports under section 504(e) of title 5, United States
22 Code, and section 2412(d)(5) of title 28, United
23 States Code, are required to be submitted under
24 paragraph (2) of this subsection.

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