

# ASSA SSC: STATEHOOD (PWOOG TASKFORCE)

By Mark Herr

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## Transparency and Accountability in Federal Steering and Advisory Committees Act

### ABSTRACT

The **Transparency and Accountability in Federal Committees Act** seeks to enhance public trust and oversight in the operations of executive branch steering and advisory committees.

This legislation mandates the disclosure of all non-governmental organization (NGO) memberships on such committees, ensuring transparency in their composition and decision-making processes. It prohibits closed executive session meetings, except under narrowly defined national security exceptions, to promote openness in governance. Additionally, the Act requires the publication of meeting minutes, discussions, and non-classified electronic communications within specified timeframes to provide the public with comprehensive access to committee activities.

To ensure compliance, the Act establishes oversight mechanisms, including monitoring by agency Inspectors General and penalties for noncompliance. These measures aim to safeguard against undue influence, foster accountability, and uphold constitutional protections while balancing national security concerns. This legislation reinforces the principles of transparency and fairness as essential to maintaining public confidence in federal decision-making processes.

# **Draft Legislation: Transparency and Accountability in Federal Steering and Advisory Committees Act**

## **A Bill**

To require the disclosure of non-governmental organization (NGO) membership on federal steering and advisory committees, prohibit closed executive session meetings, and ensure the publication of meeting minutes and communications to promote transparency and accountability.

**Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,**

## **Section 1: Short Title**

This Act may be cited as the "Transparency and Accountability in Federal Committees Act."

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## **Section 2: Definitions**

### **(a) "Steering and Advisory Committees"**

For the purposes of this Act, "steering and advisory committees" refers to any formal or informal group established by a department, bureau, agency, or commission within the executive branch to provide guidance, recommendations, or input on policies, programs, or decisions.

### **(b) "Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)"**

"Non-governmental organization" refers to any entity, group, or association that operates independently of government and does not fall under the classification of a government agency or department.

### **(c) "Executive Session"**

"Executive session" refers to any meeting or portion of a meeting conducted outside of public view, including those limited to specific committee members or stakeholders.

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## **Section 3: Disclosure of NGO Membership**

### **(a) Requirement for Public Disclosure**

All executive branch departments, bureaus, agencies, and commissions shall publicly disclose the following information for each steering or advisory committee:

1. Names of all members, including government and non-government representatives.
2. Affiliation of each member, including any non-governmental organizations, companies, or other entities represented.

3. A detailed description of the selection process for committee members.

**(b) Frequency of Updates**

The information described in subsection (a) shall be updated and made publicly accessible on the respective department or agency's website no less than once every 90 days.

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**Section 4: Prohibition of Closed Executive Sessions**

**(a) Public Accessibility Requirement**

All meetings of steering and advisory committees shall be open to the public, including both in-person and virtual formats.

**(b) Prohibition on Closed Sessions**

Executive branch entities are prohibited from conducting executive sessions or any portion of a meeting without public access, except as provided in subsection (c).

**(c) Exception for National Security**

An exception may be made for discussions explicitly classified as pertaining to national security. In such cases:

1. The classified topics must be narrowly defined and justified in writing.
  2. A public summary of the meeting's purpose and conclusions shall be provided within 14 days.
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**Section 5: Publication of Meeting Records**

**(a) Requirement for Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of all steering and advisory committee meetings shall be documented and published on the respective department or agency's website within 30 days of the meeting.

**(b) Publication of Communications**

All non-classified electronic communications, discussions, or written correspondence pertaining to committee activities, including email and messaging records, shall be made publicly accessible within 30 days of the communication.

**(c) Searchable Repository**

All records published under this section shall be stored in a publicly accessible, searchable, and indexed online repository.

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**Section 6: Compliance and Enforcement**

**(a) Independent Oversight**

The Inspector General of each respective department or agency shall monitor compliance with this Act and report any violations to Congress annually.

**(b) Penalties for Noncompliance**

Departments, bureaus, agencies, or commissions found to be in noncompliance with this Act shall:

1. Be subject to a penalty of up to \$50,000 per violation.
2. Submit a corrective action plan within 60 days to the Inspector General.

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**Section 7: Effective Date**

This Act shall take effect 180 days after the date of its enactment.

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**Section 8: Severability**

If any provision of this Act or its application is held invalid, the remainder of the Act and its application to other circumstances shall not be affected.

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**CONCLUSION**

The **Transparency and Accountability in Federal Committees Act** addresses critical gaps in oversight and accountability within the executive branch by mandating public disclosure of NGO involvement, prohibiting closed-door meetings, and requiring the publication of committee records. By establishing clear guidelines for transparency, this legislation seeks to prevent undue influence, ideological bias, and the erosion of public trust in federal decision-making processes.

Balancing openness with necessary national security safeguards, the Act reinforces democratic principles, ensuring that government actions remain fair, impartial, and accountable to the citizens they serve. With robust oversight mechanisms and actionable penalties for noncompliance, this legislation provides a clear path toward greater integrity and confidence in governance.

## **AUTHOR BIO – MARK HERR**



Mark Herr is the visionary founder of the Center for Self Governance (CSG), an innovative educational organization dedicated to promoting the principles of individual, relational, and societal self governance; the American Social Science Association and the Washington Systematic Policy and Learning Center, national and state-based institutions created to promote the development and distribution of systematic policy and the networking of systematic practitioners.

With a profound belief in the power of informed laymen to shape their communities and nations, Mark has spent over a decade empowering individuals to understand and exercise their self-governance effectively and practice systematic politics competitively.

Mark is a sought-after speaker and educator, known for his engaging teaching style and ability to distill complex concepts into actionable insights. His work has been featured in various media outlets, and he continues to inspire individuals to take ownership of their role in maintaining their individual, relational, and societal self governance.