



Sen. Rand Paul Proposes Trio of Bills to Restore Order to Lawmaking

Senator Rand Paul (shown, R-Ky.) has offered three bills designed to fundamentally change the way Congress considers legislation.

The bills — S.1663, Write the Laws Act; S.1664, One Subject at a Time Act; and S.1665, Read the Bills Act — would shine the light of transparency into a process that has become increasingly shady.

Beyond blowing the doors off the back room where votes are bought and sold, the third of Paul's proposals — much to the chagrin of Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) — would require representatives to read the bills they sign.



"When I ran for office, I promised that if elected, I would increase transparency and accessibility in the U.S. Senate," [Paul said in a press release](#). "I am proud today to introduce legislation that would require Congress to operate with more accountability to the American people."

"Too often in Congress, legislation is shoved through without hearings, amendments or debate," he continued. "Elected officials are rarely given an adequate amount of time to read the bills in full, and unlike Rep. Nancy Pelosi, I believe we must read the bills before passing them into law."

In support of his effort to change the congressional culture of passing laws without reading them (the greater sin, of course, being passing a bill without caring whether the provisions of the measure are at all consistent with constitutional enumerated powers), Paul pointed to the "direct" impact felt by Americans from his colleagues' departure "from the salutary practice of full, verbatim readings of each bill before final passage."

In that vein, the preamble to the Read the Bills Act states that Congress has:

Imposed upon the people of the United States excessively long bills, largely written by an unelected bureaucracy, resulting in generally incomprehensible, cumbersome, oppressive, and burdensome laws, containing hidden provisions for special interests.

The other two bills would make similar inroads into the congressional territory of tacking completely unrelated bills together to avoid subjecting them to independent review and consideration.

Paul's [One Subject at a Time Act](#) is short and sweet, and

requires each bill or joint resolution to embrace no more than one subject, and ... the subject to be clearly and descriptively expressed in the measure's title.

Prohibits an appropriations bill from containing any general legislation or change of existing law requirement, if its subject is not germane to the subject of such bill.



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 20, 2013

Declares void: (1) an entire Act or joint resolution if its title addresses two or more unrelated subjects, (2) provisions in legislation not clearly and descriptively expressed in the measure's title, (3) appropriation provisions in legislation outside the relevant subcommittee's jurisdiction, and (4) provisions of appropriation bills not germane to their subject matter.

Grants aggrieved persons and Members of Congress the right to bring an action against the United States to seek appropriate relief, including an injunction against the enforcement of any law the passage of which did not conform to this Act.

Finally, the [Write the Laws Act](#) takes a shot at presidential ex post facto "tinkering" with laws, an act that in fact creates a new law, despite the euphemism. In this bill, Senator Paul restores the Constitution's exclusive grant of federal legislative power to the Congress. The act:

Prohibits an Act of Congress from containing any delegation of legislative powers, whether to: (1) any component within the legislative branch, (2) the President or any other member of the executive branch, (3) the judicial branch, (4) any agency, (5) any quasi-public agency, (6) any state or state instrumentality, or (7) any other organization or individual.

Excludes from the meaning of delegation of legislative powers the issuance of presidential proclamations, or issuance of rules or regulations governing the internal operation of federal agencies, or conditions made upon grants or contracts issued by agencies.

Prohibits the promulgation or putting into effect of any new presidential directive, adjudicative decision, rule, or regulation, or change to an existing presidential directive, adjudicative decision, rule, or regulation governing, limiting, imposing a penalty on, or otherwise regulating any activity of any individual or entity, other than a federal officer or employee, unless it is authorized by an Act of Congress that complies with this Act.

Requires the Comptroller General (GAO) to identify to Congress all statutes enacted within 90 days after enactment of this Act which contain any delegation of legislative powers prohibited by it.

Denies any force or effect to any Act of Congress, presidential directive, adjudicative decision, rule, or regulation noncompliant with this Act. Prohibits any legal, equitable, regulatory, civil, or criminal action from being brought under such an Act, adjudicative decision, rule, or regulation.

Grants persons aggrieved by the action of any executive branch officer or employee the right to bring an action against the United States to seek appropriate relief, including an injunction against enforcement of any Act of Congress, presidential directive, adjudicative decision, rule, or regulation noncompliant with this Act.

"If we are to answer to the American people, it is imperative we pay close attention to how legislation is written and the subject matter it pertains to," Paul said at the end of the statement accompanying the announcement of the trio of new proposals. "These three bills will do just that."

None of the three bills currently enjoys the support of any cosponsors.

Photo of Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.): AP Images

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