

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1303

University Regulations Streamlining and Harmonization Act of 2016
Section-by-Section Summary

SECTION 2 – FINDINGS

The findings spell out the need for the bill, including the costs imposed by research regulations and the time spent on administrative activities by researchers.

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

This section sets up definitions for research funding agencies and research institutions that will be referenced in the bill.

SECTION 4 – RESEARCH POLICY BOARD

This section sets up the research policy board, which would be an advisory board of federal agency representatives and representatives of the university research community who understand the burdens placed on researchers. The board would operate out of the Office of Management and Budget and would review proposed research regulations and recommend ways to streamline regulations across research agencies.

SECTION 5 – EXCEPTIONS TO SUBRECIPIENT MONITORING UNDER THE SINGLE AUDIT ACT

Most universities undergo audits to monitor all federal funding related to scientific research grants and make sure all required rules have been followed. But in addition to this, many universities must also monitor activity related to federal grants where they collaborate with other universities. Since these monitoring activities duplicate the information provided by the audit required of most universities, this section eliminates the duplicative monitoring requirement as long as both universities undergo audits.

SECTION 6 – MICRO-PURCHASE THRESHOLD FOR PROCUREMENT SOLICITATIONS BY RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Currently, most research institutions only have to look for multiple bids on research equipment if that equipment costs over \$5,000-\$10,000. However, without providing a data-based rationale, OMB lowered this threshold to \$3,000, which would slow down purchasing of critical scientific equipment and wouldn't provide flexibility for cost-effective arrangements like bulk purchasing. This section would set the threshold to \$10,000 and provide greater flexibility for research institutions to purchase critical equipment.

SECTION 7 – SHARED DATABASE OF RESEARCHER INFORMATION

This section establishes an online database to be shared among scientific research agencies that would include biographical information on researchers including grants they have received, education background, and awards and accomplishments. This database would be used to assist researchers in

applying for federal research grants. Research agencies would be required to use the least burdensome format possible when developing the database.

SECTION 8 – MODIFICATION OF DUTIES OF INSPECTORS GENERAL AT RESEARCH AGENCIES

This section would assist policy makers in ensuring that audits and findings required by Inspectors General are based on the best available data. It would require that costs of audits be included in IG reports to Congress, and it would improve the ability of the IGs to make necessary policy changes at agencies by requiring those agencies to report why they have not made requested changes each year.

SECTION 9 – REVIEW OF PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT ESTIMATES

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that agencies estimate the burden hours that are required to fill out application forms and things of that nature. In practice, the estimates of burden hours can vary wildly on very similar forms. This section would require these estimates of burden to be more data-driven by requiring OMB to review burden estimates and requiring research agencies to redo them if inconsistent.

SECTION 10 – PUBLIC ACCESS WORKING GROUP DUTIES

This section adds a requirement to an existing working group at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy that would make them look at ways improve coordination between agencies of open access policies that give the public access to scientific research papers and results.