November 15, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Coalition Endorsement of The Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We, the undersigned organizations, write in strong support of the bipartisan Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act (“ACMRA”) and urge its prompt consideration by the full Senate. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee favorably reported the Senate version, S. 2838, on November 3, 2021, with Sens. Portman, Klobuchar, Peters, and Hassan as sponsors.¹

Once enacted, ACMRA would strengthen congressional oversight of the Executive branch and provide much needed government transparency and accountability. Specifically, ACMRA would establish the first-ever public, online database of most agency reports that are statutorily required by Congress. To do this, ACMRA would direct the vast majority of Executive branch agencies to transmit to the Government Publishing Office reports that federal law requires them to submit to Congress; GPO will serve as a central repository. In addition, ACMRA would direct the compilation of most laws mandating agency reports to Congress and require GPO to track whether it has received the reports.

Committees would continue to receive the reports directly and no fewer than 30 days prior to their publication on GPO’s website. Reports and materials not otherwise eligible for public release are not directed to be published under this law, nor those submitted to certain committees, and all committees have the option to withhold specific reports from online publication. ACMRA does not expand the number of reports that can become publicly available beyond those already obtainable under the Freedom of Information Act, but would make it easier for senators and committees to obtain the vast majority of reports submitted to Congress. Noted scholar and former CRS attorney Harold Relyea described publication of mandated reports as “useful to the committee operations of the entire Congress.”²

¹ The Senate companion legislation is S. 2838.
The Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act enjoys broad and longstanding congressional and public support. The House of Representatives already passed H.R. 2485 in July. Legislation with this name was first introduced in the 111th Congress and was reintroduced on a bipartisan basis in succeeding Congresses — passing the House on multiple occasions as well as being favorably reported by committee in the Senate.³

It is our fervent hope that the Senate will soon take up and pass the ACMRA, further strengthening Congress’s oversight capabilities and adding a much-needed Executive branch accountability tool to the Legislative branch’s arsenal.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, Policy Director for Demand Progress, at Daniel@DemandProgress.org.

Sincerely yours,

American Library Association
Americans for Prosperity
Association of Research Libraries
Bipartisan Policy Center Action
Data Coalition
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Federation of American Scientists
Free Government Information (FGI)
FreedomWorks
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Issue One
League of Women Voters of the United States
Media Alliance
National Security Counselors
National Taxpayers Union
Niskanen Center
Open The Government

³ See S. 195 (116th) (favorably reported by committee); H.R. 736 (116th) (passed House); S. 3438 (115th); H.R. 4631 (ordered to be reported by committee); H.R. 5876 (114th); H.R. 1380 (113th) (ordered to be reported by committee); S. 1411 (112th); H.R. 1974 (112th) (reported by committee); H.R. 6026 (111th).
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Protect Democracy
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association
The Digital Democracy Project
The Governance Lab
Transparency International — U.S. Office
Unite America

Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown*
Marci Harris, POPVOX*
Prof. Kevin Esterling, University of California, Riverside*

* = Affiliation listed for identification purposes only.

cc: Sen. Rob Portman
    Sen. Amy Klobuchar
    Sen. Gary Peters
    Sen. Maggie Hassan
    Sen. Jack Reed
    Sen. James Inhofe