



Reexamination of Agency Reporting Requirements: Annual Process Under the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA)

Clinton T. Brass

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On January 4, 2011, the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) became law. The acronym “GPRA” in the act’s short title refers to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA 1993), a law that GPRAMA substantially modified. Some of GPRAMA’s provisions require agencies to produce plans and reports for a variety of audiences that focus on goal-setting and performance measurement. Other provisions, by contrast, establish an annual process to reexamine the usefulness of certain reporting requirements.

Specifically, Section 11 of GPRAMA enacts into law a multi-step process in which the President and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) may propose to Congress that certain plans and reports be eliminated or consolidated. The GPRAMA process covers the plans and reports that executive branch agencies produce “for Congress” in response to statutory requirements or as directed in non-statutory congressional reports. As a consequence of this scope, the GPRAMA process covers some, but not all, reporting requirements. For example, reports from the President are not covered, because the President is not an “agency” under the act. Notably, as a step in this process, GPRAMA requires an agency to consult with congressional committees to determine whether products are considered to be useful or could be eliminated or consolidated.

This Congressional Research Service report provides an overview of GPRAMA’s processes that relate to the reexamination of agency reporting requirements. To provide context, the report begins by discussing potential categories, advantages, and disadvantages of reporting requirements. Notably, views about the advantages and disadvantages of reporting requirements may be in the eye of the beholder. Congress also may intend to make information available to primary audiences in addition to itself, such as key non-federal stakeholders and the broader public. Because GPRAMA’s provisions are not the first to focus on agency reporting requirements, the report contrasts GPRAMA’s provisions with related authorities and selected efforts from the past.

The report concludes by highlighting potential issues for Congress in two categories. First, looking ahead to annual implementation of GPRAMA’s provisions, the President and OMB may propose that specific reporting requirements be consolidated or eliminated. Members and committees of Congress may consider a specific proposal from several perspectives, including the sufficiency of consultations with agencies about reporting requirements, the broader policy and political context of a proposed change to a reporting requirement, a reporting requirement’s usefulness to Congress and other primary audiences, and a reporting requirement’s costs and side effects.

Second, Congress may evaluate how well the GPRAMA process is working. If Congress perceives a problem or the potential for improvement, Congress may consider amending the law to change aspects of how the process operates. A number of topics might be examined, including the reporting requirements that GPRAMA’s statutory process covers and does not cover, how consultations are required to take place, and how proposals to modify or eliminate reporting requirements are to be justified with analysis.

This report will be updated to track any statutory changes to GPRAMA's process and some aspects of the law's implementation.

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