

SENATE MOVES TO HIDE OUR SECRET GOVERNMENT

A few weeks ago, the fact that there are now 4.8 million people in the US with security clearances got a fair amount of attention. 1.5% of our country has access to at least information classified as secret. The job security of most of those people depends on maintaining good standing in the somewhat arbitrary world of security clearance.

The Senate Intelligence Committee wants to make sure we don't learn that number anymore.

In the Intelligence Authorization, it just eliminated the requirement for that report.

(3) REPEAL OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS REGARDING SECURITY CLEARANCES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 506H of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 415a–10) is repealed.

(B) TABLE OF CONTENTS AMENDMENT.— The National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) is amended in the table of contents in the first section by striking the item relating to section 506H.

The language this bill would repeal reads, in part,

(b) Report on Security Clearance Determinations.—

(1) Not later than February 1 of each year, the President shall submit to Congress a report on the security clearance process. Such report shall include, for each security clearance level—

(A) the number of employees of the

United States Government who—

(i) held a security clearance at such level as of October 1 of the preceding year; and

(ii) were approved for a security clearance at such level during the preceding fiscal year;

(B) the number of contractors to the United States Government who—

(i) held a security clearance at such level as of October 1 of the preceding year; and

(ii) were approved for a security clearance at such level during the preceding fiscal year;

When ODNI requested the elimination of this report in June, arguing that since the government has caught up on the backlog approving security clearances, it suggested there is no more reason to track this information. If Congress still cares how big our secret government has gotten, ODNI says, they can get briefings.

Justification: Section 506H includes two enduring reporting requirements. The requirement for a quadrennial audit of positions requiring security clearances should be repealed because the National Counterintelligence Executive, in partnership with other agencies with similar responsibilities, examines the manner in which security clearance requirements are determined more frequently than once every four years. Rather than submit a report regarding a quadrennial activity, the executive branch can provide more frequent briefings, as requested, if congressional interest persists. With regard to the annual reporting requirement on security clearance

determinations, the Executive Branch as a whole has made significant progress in expediting and streamlining the security clearance process since the passage of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, thus reducing the saliency of this report. This reporting requirement should be replaced by briefings, as requested, if congressional interest persists.

I guess “giving citizens a hint of the size of their secret government” has nothing to do with why this report was considered salient.

This is crazy. As our secret government continues to metastasize, and as those who hold clearances are subjected to an increasingly arbitrary system of control (which I’ll discuss in a later report), the Senate Intelligence Committee has moved to hide the one report that gives us a sense of how big the secret government really is (and how much of our secret government consists of contractors).