

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1729

To provide the public with access to the laws of the United States, and
for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2017

Mr. BRAT (for himself and Mr. MOULTON) introduced the following bill; which
was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To provide the public with access to the laws of the United
States, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Statutes at Large
5 Modernization Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The United States was established under “a
9 government of laws, and not of men”.

1 (2) The rule of law requires that the laws be
2 available to the people.

3 (3) Active, permanent laws are codified in the
4 United States Code, which is maintained by the Of-
5 fice of the Law Revision Counsel at [http://](http://uscode.house.gov/)
6 uscode.house.gov/.

7 (4) The United States Code usually does not in-
8 clude, however, repealed laws, original statutes that
9 have since been amended, or those with limited du-
10 ration such as appropriations acts. Furthermore, un-
11 codified titles of the United States Code are merely
12 “evidence” of the law before the judicial branch, so
13 attorneys must consult the United States Statutes at
14 Large.

15 (5) The United States Statutes at Large is
16 compiled by the National Archives and Records Ad-
17 ministration. It is legal and permanent evidence of
18 all the laws enacted during a session of Congress be-
19 ginning with the First Congress in 1789. It also
20 contains concurrent resolutions, reorganization
21 plans, proposed and ratified amendments to the
22 Constitution of the United States, and proclamations
23 by the President.

24 (6) The Statutes at Large collection is pub-
25 lished under the direction of the Office of the Fed-

1 eral Register through the Congressional Printing
2 Management Division of the Government Publishing
3 Office.

4 (7) The Law Library of Congress has begun to
5 digitize the Statutes at Large. It has published all
6 volumes in a text-over-PDF format. They appear as
7 scanned PDF images with basic search capability.

8 (8) More resources are needed to adequately re-
9 fine and structure the embedded data elements that
10 enable advanced search functions, machine read-
11 ability, and other useful options.

12 (9) The Government Publishing Office is the
13 appropriate entity to lead the online digitization of
14 the Statutes at Large in collaboration with other
15 Federal and private entities with expertise in devel-
16 oping formatting conventions for legislative mate-
17 rials.

18 (10) Incorporating relevant digital information
19 into www.Congress.gov would make it a more useful
20 and comprehensive research resource.

21 **SEC. 3. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE LAWS OF THE UNITED**
22 **STATES.**

23 (a) ONLINE AVAILABILITY OF STATUTES AT LARGE
24 THROUGH GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE.—Section
25 728 of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

1 (1) in the first undesignated paragraph, by
2 striking “The Director” and inserting “(a) PRINT-
3 ING AND DISTRIBUTION.—The Director”;

4 (2) in the second undesignated paragraph, by
5 striking “The Director” and inserting “(b) TREA-
6 TIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS.—
7 The Director”; and

8 (3) by adding at the end the following new sub-
9 section:

10 “(c) ONLINE ACCESS TO STATUTES AT LARGE.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall make
12 the Statutes at Large available to the public at no
13 cost on a website in a searchable, non-proprietary
14 format.

15 “(2) CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.—The
16 Director shall ensure that the searchable online edi-
17 tion of the United States Statutes at Large made
18 available under this subsection is prepared in con-
19 sultation and coordination with entities that develop
20 formatting conventions used for enrolled bills and
21 other legislative materials, which may include the Li-
22 brary of Congress, the Office of the Clerk of the
23 House of Representatives, the Office of the Sec-
24 retary of the Senate, the Office of the Legislative
25 Counsel of the House of Representatives, the Office

1 of the Legislative Counsel of the Senate, the Office
2 of the Law Revision Counsel, the Congressional Re-
3 search Service, the National Archives and Records
4 Administration, and such other public and private
5 entities that the Director considers appropriate.”.

6 (b) REQUIRING LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS TO INCOR-
7 PORATE SEARCHABLE STATUTES AT LARGE INTO LEGIS-
8 LATIVE INFORMATION RETRIEVAL SYSTEM.—Section 209
9 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996 (2
10 U.S.C. 180) is amended by adding at the end the following
11 new subsection:

12 “(f) In addition to the legislative information de-
13 scribed in subsection (b), the relevant electronic informa-
14 tion made available by the Director of the Government
15 Publishing Office under section 728(c) of title 44, United
16 States Code, shall be incorporated into the legislative in-
17 formation service to the extent practicable.”.

18 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
19 authorized to be appropriated \$5,000,000 for each of fis-
20 cal years 2018 through 2022 to carry out the provisions
21 of this Act.

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