

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 469

AN ACT

To impose certain limitations on consent decrees and settlement agreements by agencies that require the agencies to take regulatory action in accordance with the terms thereof, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Congressional Article I Powers Strengthening Act”.

4 (b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents of
5 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

**TITLE I—SUNSHINE FOR REGULATIONS AND REGULATORY
DECREES AND SETTLEMENTS**

Sec. 101. Short title.

Sec. 102. Definitions.

Sec. 103. Consent decree and settlement reform.

Sec. 104. Motions to modify consent decrees.

Sec. 105. Effective date.

TITLE II—JUDGMENT FUND TRANSPARENCY

Sec. 201. Short title.

Sec. 202. Judgment fund transparency.

TITLE III—ARTICLE I AMICUS AND INTERVENTION

Sec. 301. Short title.

Sec. 302. Congressional intervention as of right.

Sec. 303. Intervention and amicus authority for house of representatives.

6 **TITLE I—SUNSHINE FOR REGU-**
7 **LATIONS AND REGULATORY**
8 **DECREES AND SETTLEMENTS**

9 **SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.**

10 This title may be cited as the “Sunshine for Regula-
11 tions and Regulatory Decrees and Settlements Act of
12 2017”.

13 **SEC. 102. DEFINITIONS.**

14 In this title—

1 (1) the terms “agency” and “agency action”
2 have the meanings given those terms under section
3 551 of title 5, United States Code;

4 (2) the term “covered civil action” means a civil
5 action—

6 (A) seeking to compel agency action;

7 (B) alleging that the agency is unlawfully
8 withholding or unreasonably delaying an agency
9 action relating to a regulatory action that would
10 affect the rights of—

11 (i) private persons other than the per-
12 son bringing the action; or

13 (ii) a State, local, or tribal govern-
14 ment; and

15 (C) brought under—

16 (i) chapter 7 of title 5, United States
17 Code; or

18 (ii) any other statute authorizing such
19 an action;

20 (3) the term “covered consent decree” means—

21 (A) a consent decree entered into in a cov-
22 ered civil action; and

23 (B) any other consent decree that requires
24 agency action relating to a regulatory action
25 that affects the rights of—

1 (i) private persons other than the per-
2 son bringing the action; or

3 (ii) a State, local, or tribal govern-
4 ment;

5 (4) the term “covered consent decree or settle-
6 ment agreement” means a covered consent decree
7 and a covered settlement agreement; and

8 (5) the term “covered settlement agreement”
9 means—

10 (A) a settlement agreement entered into in
11 a covered civil action; and

12 (B) any other settlement agreement that
13 requires agency action relating to a regulatory
14 action that affects the rights of—

15 (i) private persons other than the per-
16 son bringing the action; or

17 (ii) a State, local, or tribal govern-
18 ment.

19 **SEC. 103. CONSENT DECREE AND SETTLEMENT REFORM.**

20 (a) PLEADINGS AND PRELIMINARY MATTERS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—In any covered civil action,
22 the agency against which the covered civil action is
23 brought shall publish the notice of intent to sue and
24 the complaint in a readily accessible manner, includ-
25 ing by making the notice of intent to sue and the

1 complaint available online not later than 15 days
2 after receiving service of the notice of intent to sue
3 or complaint, respectively.

4 (2) ENTRY OF A COVERED CONSENT DECREE
5 OR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.—A party may not
6 make a motion for entry of a covered consent decree
7 or to dismiss a civil action pursuant to a covered set-
8 tlement agreement until after the end of proceedings
9 in accordance with paragraph (1) and subpara-
10 graphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2) of subsection
11 (d) or subsection (d)(3)(A), whichever is later.

12 (b) INTERVENTION.—

13 (1) REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION.—In consid-
14 ering a motion to intervene in a covered civil action
15 or a civil action in which a covered consent decree
16 or settlement agreement has been proposed that is
17 filed by a person who alleges that the agency action
18 in dispute would affect the person, the court shall
19 presume, subject to rebuttal, that the interests of
20 the person would not be represented adequately by
21 the existing parties to the action.

22 (2) STATE, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERN-
23 MENTS.—In considering a motion to intervene in a
24 covered civil action or a civil action in which a cov-
25 ered consent decree or settlement agreement has

1 been proposed that is filed by a State, local, or tribal
2 government, the court shall take due account of
3 whether the movant—

4 (A) administers jointly with an agency that
5 is a defendant in the action the statutory provi-
6 sions that give rise to the regulatory action to
7 which the action relates; or

8 (B) administers an authority under State,
9 local, or tribal law that would be preempted by
10 the regulatory action to which the action re-
11 lates.

12 (c) SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS.—Efforts to settle
13 a covered civil action or otherwise reach an agreement on
14 a covered consent decree or settlement agreement shall—

15 (1) be conducted pursuant to the mediation or
16 alternative dispute resolution program of the court
17 or by a district judge other than the presiding judge,
18 magistrate judge, or special master, as determined
19 appropriate by the presiding judge; and

20 (2) include any party that intervenes in the ac-
21 tion.

22 (d) PUBLICATION OF AND COMMENT ON COVERED
23 CONSENT DECREES OR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days be-
25 fore the date on which a covered consent decree or

1 settlement agreement is filed with a court, the agen-
2 cy seeking to enter the covered consent decree or
3 settlement agreement shall publish in the Federal
4 Register and online—

5 (A) the proposed covered consent decree or
6 settlement agreement; and

7 (B) a statement providing—

8 (i) the statutory basis for the covered
9 consent decree or settlement agreement;
10 and

11 (ii) a description of the terms of the
12 covered consent decree or settlement agree-
13 ment, including whether it provides for the
14 award of attorneys' fees or costs and, if so,
15 the basis for including the award.

16 (2) PUBLIC COMMENT.—

17 (A) IN GENERAL.—An agency seeking to
18 enter a covered consent decree or settlement
19 agreement shall accept public comment during
20 the period described in paragraph (1) on any
21 issue relating to the matters alleged in the com-
22 plaint in the applicable civil action or addressed
23 or affected by the proposed covered consent de-
24 cree or settlement agreement.

1 (B) RESPONSE TO COMMENTS.—An agency
2 shall respond to any comment received under
3 subparagraph (A).

4 (C) SUBMISSIONS TO COURT.—When mov-
5 ing that the court enter a proposed covered con-
6 sent decree or settlement agreement or for dis-
7 missal pursuant to a proposed covered consent
8 decree or settlement agreement, an agency
9 shall—

10 (i) inform the court of the statutory
11 basis for the proposed covered consent de-
12 cree or settlement agreement and its
13 terms;

14 (ii) submit to the court a summary of
15 the comments received under subparagraph
16 (A) and the response of the agency to the
17 comments;

18 (iii) submit to the court a certified
19 index of the administrative record of the
20 notice and comment proceeding; and

21 (iv) make the administrative record
22 described in clause (iii) fully accessible to
23 the court.

24 (D) INCLUSION IN RECORD.—The court
25 shall include in the court record for a civil ac-

1 tion the certified index of the administrative
2 record submitted by an agency under subpara-
3 graph (C)(iii) and any documents listed in the
4 index which any party or amicus curiae appear-
5 ing before the court in the action submits to the
6 court.

7 (3) PUBLIC HEARINGS PERMITTED.—

8 (A) IN GENERAL.—After providing notice
9 in the Federal Register and online, an agency
10 may hold a public hearing regarding whether to
11 enter into a proposed covered consent decree or
12 settlement agreement.

13 (B) RECORD.—If an agency holds a public
14 hearing under subparagraph (A)—

15 (i) the agency shall—

16 (I) submit to the court a sum-
17 mary of the proceedings;

18 (II) submit to the court a cer-
19 tified index of the hearing record; and

20 (III) provide access to the hear-
21 ing record to the court; and

22 (ii) the full hearing record shall be in-
23 cluded in the court record.

24 (4) MANDATORY DEADLINES.—If a proposed
25 covered consent decree or settlement agreement re-

1 quires an agency action by a date certain, the agen-
2 cy shall, when moving for entry of the covered con-
3 sent decree or settlement agreement or dismissal
4 based on the covered consent decree or settlement
5 agreement, inform the court of—

6 (A) any required regulatory action the
7 agency has not taken that the covered consent
8 decree or settlement agreement does not ad-
9 dress;

10 (B) how the covered consent decree or set-
11 tlement agreement, if approved, would affect
12 the discharge of the duties described in sub-
13 paragraph (A); and

14 (C) why the effects of the covered consent
15 decree or settlement agreement on the manner
16 in which the agency discharges its duties is in
17 the public interest.

18 (e) SUBMISSION BY THE GOVERNMENT.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—For any proposed covered
20 consent decree or settlement agreement that con-
21 tains a term described in paragraph (2), the Attor-
22 ney General or, if the matter is being litigated inde-
23 pendently by an agency, the head of the agency shall
24 submit to the court a certification that the Attorney
25 General or head of the agency approves the proposed

1 covered consent decree or settlement agreement. The
2 Attorney General or head of the agency shall person-
3 ally sign any certification submitted under this para-
4 graph.

5 (2) TERMS.—A term described in this para-
6 graph is—

7 (A) in the case of a covered consent decree,
8 a term that—

9 (i) converts into a nondiscretionary
10 duty a discretionary authority of an agency
11 to propose, promulgate, revise, or amend
12 regulations;

13 (ii) commits an agency to expend
14 funds that have not been appropriated and
15 that have not been budgeted for the regu-
16 latory action in question;

17 (iii) commits an agency to seek a par-
18 ticular appropriation or budget authoriza-
19 tion;

20 (iv) divests an agency of discretion
21 committed to the agency by statute or the
22 Constitution of the United States, without
23 regard to whether the discretion was
24 granted to respond to changing cir-
25 cumstances, to make policy or managerial

1 choices, or to protect the rights of third
2 parties; or

3 (v) otherwise affords relief that the
4 court could not enter under its own au-
5 thority upon a final judgment in the civil
6 action; or

7 (B) in the case of a covered settlement
8 agreement, a term—

9 (i) that provides a remedy for a fail-
10 ure by the agency to comply with the
11 terms of the covered settlement agreement
12 other than the revival of the civil action re-
13 solved by the covered settlement agree-
14 ment; and

15 (ii) that—

16 (I) interferes with the authority
17 of an agency to revise, amend, or
18 issue rules under the procedures set
19 forth in chapter 5 of title 5, United
20 States Code, or any other statute or
21 Executive order prescribing rule-
22 making procedures for a rulemaking
23 that is the subject of the covered set-
24 tlement agreement;

1 (II) commits the agency to ex-
2 pend funds that have not been appro-
3 priated and that have not been budg-
4 eted for the regulatory action in ques-
5 tion; or

6 (III) for such a covered settle-
7 ment agreement that commits the
8 agency to exercise in a particular way
9 discretion which was committed to the
10 agency by statute or the Constitution
11 of the United States to respond to
12 changing circumstances, to make pol-
13 icy or managerial choices, or to pro-
14 tect the rights of third parties.

15 (f) REVIEW BY COURT.—

16 (1) AMICUS.—A court considering a proposed
17 covered consent decree or settlement agreement shall
18 presume, subject to rebuttal, that it is proper to
19 allow amicus participation relating to the covered
20 consent decree or settlement agreement by any per-
21 son who filed public comments or participated in a
22 public hearing on the covered consent decree or set-
23 tlement agreement under paragraph (2) or (3) of
24 subsection (d).

25 (2) REVIEW OF DEADLINES.—

1 (A) PROPOSED COVERED CONSENT DE-
2 CREES.—For a proposed covered consent de-
3 cree, a court shall not approve the covered con-
4 sent decree unless the proposed covered consent
5 decree allows sufficient time and incorporates
6 adequate procedures for the agency to comply
7 with chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code,
8 and other applicable statutes that govern rule-
9 making and, unless contrary to the public inter-
10 est, the provisions of any Executive order that
11 governs rulemaking.

12 (B) PROPOSED COVERED SETTLEMENT
13 AGREEMENTS.—For a proposed covered settle-
14 ment agreement, a court shall ensure that the
15 covered settlement agreement allows sufficient
16 time and incorporates adequate procedures for
17 the agency to comply with chapter 5 of title 5,
18 United States Code, and other applicable stat-
19 utes that govern rulemaking and, unless con-
20 trary to the public interest, the provisions of
21 any Executive order that governs rulemaking.

22 (g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Each agency shall submit to
23 Congress an annual report that, for the year covered by
24 the report, includes—

1 (1) the number, identity, and content of covered
2 civil actions brought against and covered consent de-
3 crees or settlement agreements entered against or
4 into by the agency; and

5 (2) a description of the statutory basis for—

6 (A) each covered consent decree or settle-
7 ment agreement entered against or into by the
8 agency; and

9 (B) any award of attorneys fees or costs in
10 a civil action resolved by a covered consent de-
11 cree or settlement agreement entered against or
12 into by the agency.

13 **SEC. 104. MOTIONS TO MODIFY CONSENT DECREES.**

14 If an agency moves a court to modify a covered con-
15 sent decree or settlement agreement and the basis of the
16 motion is that the terms of the covered consent decree or
17 settlement agreement are no longer fully in the public in-
18 terest due to the obligations of the agency to fulfill other
19 duties or due to changed facts and circumstances, the
20 court shall review the motion and the covered consent de-
21 cree or settlement agreement de novo.

22 **SEC. 105. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

23 This title shall apply to—

24 (1) any covered civil action filed on or after the
25 date of enactment of this title; and

1 (2) any covered consent decree or settlement
2 agreement proposed to a court on or after the date
3 of enactment of this title.

4 **TITLE II—JUDGMENT FUND**
5 **TRANSPARENCY**

6 **SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.**

7 This title may be cited as the “Judgment Fund
8 Transparency Act of 2017”.

9 **SEC. 202. JUDGMENT FUND TRANSPARENCY.**

10 (a) **TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENT.**—Section 1304
11 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at
12 the end the following:

13 “(d)(1) Unless the disclosure of such information is
14 otherwise prohibited by law (other than section 552a of
15 title 5, United States Code) or court order, the Secretary
16 of the Treasury shall make available to the public on a
17 website, as soon as practicable, but not later than 30 days
18 after the date on which a payment under this section is
19 tendered on or after January 1, 2016, the following infor-
20 mation with regard to that payment:

21 “(A) The name of the specific agency or entity
22 whose actions gave rise to the claim or judgment.

23 “(B) The name of the plaintiff or claimant.

24 “(C) The name of counsel for the plaintiff or
25 claimant.

1 “(D) The amount paid representing principal li-
2 ability, and any amounts paid representing any an-
3 cillary liability, including attorney fees, costs, and
4 interest.

5 “(E) A brief description of the facts that gave
6 rise to the claim.

7 “(F) The name of the agency that submitted
8 the claim.

9 “(G) Any information available on reports gen-
10 erated by the Judgment Fund Payment Search ad-
11 ministered by the Treasury Department.

12 “(2) In addition to the information described in para-
13 graph (1), if a payment under this section is made to a
14 foreign state on or after January 1, 2016, the Secretary
15 of the Treasury shall make available to the public in ac-
16 cordance with paragraph (1), the following information
17 with regard to that payment:

18 “(A) A description of the method of payment.

19 “(B) A description of the currency denomina-
20 tions used for the payment.

21 “(C) The name and location of each financial
22 institution owned or controlled, directly or indirectly,
23 by a foreign state or an agent of a foreign state
24 through which the payment passed or from which
25 the payment was withdrawn, including any financial

1 institution owned or controlled, directly or indirectly,
2 by a foreign state or an agent of a foreign state that
3 is holding the payment as of the date on which the
4 information is made available.

5 “(3) Not later than January 1, 2018, and annually
6 thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall make avail-
7 able to the public on the website described in paragraph
8 (1)—

9 “(A) the total amount paid under this section
10 during the year preceding the date of the report; and

11 “(B) the amount paid under this section during
12 the year preceding the date of the report—

13 “(i) for attorney fees;

14 “(ii) for interest; and

15 “(iii) for all other payments.

16 “(4) In this subsection, the term ‘foreign state’ has
17 the meaning given the term in section 1603 of title 28.

18 “(e) Except with regard to children under eighteen,
19 the disclosure of information required in this section shall
20 not be considered a ‘clearly unwarranted invasion of per-
21 sonal privacy’ for purposes of title 5, United States Code.

22 “(f) No payment may be made under this section to
23 a state sponsor of terrorism, as defined in section
24 1605A(h) of title 28, or to an organization that has been
25 designated as a foreign terrorist organization under sec-

1 tion 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
2 1189).”.

3 (b) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of the Treas-
4 ury shall carry out the amendment made by this section
5 by not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of
6 this title.

7 **TITLE III—ARTICLE I AMICUS**
8 **AND INTERVENTION**

9 **SEC. 301. SHORT TITLE.**

10 This title may be cited as the “Article I Amicus and
11 Intervention Act of 2017”.

12 **SEC. 302. CONGRESSIONAL INTERVENTION AS OF RIGHT.**

13 (a) DEADLINE FOR REPORT ON LIMITATION ON EN-
14 FORCEMENT OF LAWS.—Paragraph (2) of section
15 530D(b) of title 28, United States Code, is amended to
16 read as follows:

17 “(2) under subsection (a)(1)(B), within such
18 time as will reasonably enable the House of Rep-
19 resentatives and the Senate to take action, sepa-
20 rately or jointly, to intervene in a timely fashion in
21 the proceeding, but in no event—

22 “(A) later than 30 days after the making
23 of each determination; and

1 “(B) later than 21 days before any appli-
2 cable deadline for filing any pleading nec-
3 essary—

4 “(i) to defend or assert the constitu-
5 tionality of the provision at issue; or

6 “(ii) to request review of any judicial,
7 administrative, or other determination ad-
8 versely affecting the constitutionality of
9 such provision;”.

10 (b) INTERVENTION AS OF RIGHT.—Section 530D of
11 title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
12 end the following:

13 “(f) INTERVENTION AS OF RIGHT.—The Senate or
14 House of Representatives may intervene as of right in any
15 proceeding referenced in subsection (a)(1)(B) in order to
16 defend or assert the constitutionality of any provision of
17 any Federal statute, rule, regulation, program, policy, or
18 other law, or to appeal or request review of any judicial,
19 administrative, or other determination adversely affecting
20 the constitutionality of any such provision. Notwith-
21 standing any otherwise applicable time limits or other pro-
22 visions of law to the contrary, if such intervention is filed
23 not later than 21 days after receipt of the notice required
24 by this section the intervention shall be deemed timely and
25 shall preserve the right of the Senate or House of Rep-

1 representatives to advance any applicable legal arguments in
2 favor of the constitutionality of any such provision.”.

3 **SEC. 303. INTERVENTION AND AMICUS AUTHORITY FOR**
4 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

5 Section 101 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations
6 Act, 2000 (2 U.S.C. 5571), is amended—

7 (1) by striking subsection (d); and

8 (2) by inserting after subsection (b) the fol-
9 lowing (and redesignating succeeding subsections ac-
10 cordingly):

11 “(c) HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INTERVENTION
12 AND AMICUS AUTHORITY.—

13 “(1) ACTIONS OR PROCEEDINGS.—When di-
14 rected to do so in accordance with the Rules of the
15 House of Representatives, the General Counsel of
16 the House of Representatives shall intervene or ap-
17 pear as amicus curiae in the name of the House, or
18 in the name of an officer, committee, subcommittee,
19 or chair of a committee or subcommittee of the
20 House, or other entity of the House, in any legal ac-
21 tion or proceeding pending in any court of the
22 United States or of a State or political subdivision
23 thereof.

24 “(2) INTERVENTION OR APPEARANCE AS OF
25 RIGHT.—Intervention as a party or appearance as

1 amicus curiae shall be of right and may be denied
2 by a court only upon an express finding that such
3 intervention or appearance is untimely and would
4 significantly delay the pending action or, in the case
5 of intervention, that standing to intervene is re-
6 quired and has not been established under section 2
7 of article III of the Constitution of the United
8 States.

9 “(3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in
10 this section shall be construed to confer standing on
11 any party seeking to bring, or jurisdiction on any
12 court with respect to, any civil or criminal action
13 against Congress, either House of Congress, a Mem-
14 ber of Congress, a committee or subcommittee of a
15 House of Congress, any office or agency of Con-
16 gress, or any officer or employee of a House of Con-
17 gress or any office or agency of Congress.”.

Passed the House of Representatives October 25,
2017.

Attest:

Clerk.

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 469

AN ACT

To impose certain limitations on consent decrees and settlement agreements by agencies that require the agencies to take regulatory action in accordance with the terms thereof, and for other purposes.