

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9499

To require the United States Agency for Global Media to verify the authenticity of foreign academic credentials purported to be held by prospective and existing employees of the Agency, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

Mr. BURCHETT (for himself and Mr. McCAUL) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To require the United States Agency for Global Media to verify the authenticity of foreign academic credentials purported to be held by prospective and existing employees of the Agency, 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 “Securing the Integrity
5 of Ethics in Government Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) **ADVISORY BOARD.**—The term “Advisory
2 Board” means the International Broadcasting Advi-
3 sory Board as described in section 306 of the United
4 States International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (22
5 U.S.C. 6205).

6 (2) **AGENCY.**—The term “Agency” means the
7 United States Agency for Global Media.

8 (3) **CREDENTIAL EVALUATION SERVICE.**—The
9 term “credential evaluation service” means an orga-
10 nization that is—

11 (A) a member organization of—

12 (i) the National Association of Cre-
13 dential Evaluation Services; or

14 (ii) the Association of International
15 Credentials Evaluators; and

16 (B) has as its primary purpose the evalua-
17 tion and validation of academic credentials.

18 (4) **FOREIGN ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL.**—The
19 term “foreign academic credential” means a creden-
20 tial awarded for the completion of an undergraduate
21 or a graduate-level course of study at a postsec-
22 ondary educational institution located outside the
23 United States.

1 **SEC. 3. DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning on the effective date of
3 this Act, the Agency may not appoint an individual who
4 purports to have a foreign academic credential (as de-
5 scribed in subsection (c)) to a position in the Agency high-
6 er than GS–11 (or the equivalent), including a position
7 for which such credential is not required, unless, prior to
8 such appointment, the Agency obtains—

9 (1)(A) a written evaluation from a credential
10 evaluation service that includes—

11 (i) verification that the foreign aca-
12 demic credential was earned by the indi-
13 vidual at a postsecondary educational insti-
14 tution outside the United States;

15 (ii) the name of the institution that
16 awarded the credential;

17 (iii) the type of credential earned by
18 the individual;

19 (iv) the academic subject matter to
20 which the credential pertains;

21 (v) an analysis indicating whether the
22 foreign academic credential is comparable
23 to a type of academic credential awarded
24 by postsecondary educational institutions
25 in the United States and, if so, which type
26 of domestically awarded credential is most

1 comparable to the foreign academic creden-
2 tial;

3 (vi) an explanation of the processes
4 and standards used by the credential eval-
5 uation service to determine the validity and
6 comparability of the foreign academic cre-
7 dential under clauses (i) and (v), respec-
8 tively;

9 (vii) a statement confirming that the
10 standards and processes used to evaluate
11 the comparability of the foreign academic
12 credential under clause (v) followed the rel-
13 evant guidelines of the International Edu-
14 cation Standards Council; and

15 (viii) an assurance confirming that the
16 credential evaluation service—

17 (I) inspected all documentation
18 submitted to the service in connection
19 with the service's evaluation of the
20 foreign academic credential; and

21 (II) did not find any evidence of
22 fraud, forgery, or other material irreg-
23 ularities in such documentation; and

24 (B) documentation, such as an academic tran-
25 script or diploma, demonstrating that the individual

1 completed all requirements necessary to obtain the
2 foreign academic credential, which shall—

3 (i) be provided directly to the Agency by
4 the postsecondary educational institution that
5 issued the credential; and

6 (ii) be certified as authentic by an official
7 of the institution authorized to issue such docu-
8 mentation; or

9 (2) alternative documentation, obtained directly
10 from the Government of the foreign country with ju-
11 risdiction over the institution that awarded the cre-
12 dential, demonstrating the validity of the credential.

13 (b) VERIFICATION OF FOREIGN ACADEMIC CREDEN-
14 TIALS FOR EXISTING EMPLOYEES.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
16 after the effective date of this Act, the Agency shall
17 obtain the documentation described in subsection
18 (a)(1) or the alternative documentation described in
19 subsection (a)(2) with respect to each foreign aca-
20 demic credential purported to be held (as described
21 in subsection (c)) by an individual in a position in
22 the Agency that is higher than GS–11.

23 (2) PENALTY.—The Agency shall take appro-
24 priate disciplinary action with respect to an indi-
25 vidual described in paragraph (1) in the event the

1 Agency is unable to obtain the documentation re-
2 quired under such paragraph for a foreign academic
3 credential purported to be held by such individual.

4 (c) **RULE OF APPLICABILITY.**—The requirements
5 under subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to
6 foreign academic credentials that are—

7 (1) disclosed in the application or other mate-
8 rials received by the Agency in connection with the
9 hiring of an individual; or

10 (2) otherwise noted in the employment record of
11 an individual.

12 (d) **ALTERNATIVE DOCUMENTATION PROCEDURE**
13 **DURES.**—The Agency shall seek to establish procedures,
14 in consultation with appropriate officials of foreign Gov-
15 ernments, through which the Agency may obtain the alter-
16 native documentation described in subsection (a)(2)(A).

17 **SEC. 4. OVERTIME PAYMENTS.**

18 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Agency shall—

19 (1) record all overtime pay paid to—

20 (A) employees of the Agency; and

21 (B) contractors of the Agency; and

22 (2) establish a system to track such overtime
23 pay as a result of expiring compensatory time off.

24 (b) **NOTICE AND APPROVAL.**—The supervisor of an
25 employee claiming overtime work in excess of the guide-

1 lines of the Agency or overtime pay with respect to expir-
2 ing compensatory time off may not approve such overtime
3 work or overtime pay unless such supervisor submits a re-
4 quest for approval to, and such request is approved by,
5 the Chief Management Officer of the Agency or such other
6 officer designated by the Agency.

7 **SEC. 5. REVIEW OF UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL**
8 **BROADCASTING.**

9 Section 306(d) of the United States International
10 Broadcasting Act of 1994 (22 U.S.C. 6205(d)) is amend-
11 ed—

12 (1) in paragraph (6)(B), by striking “and” at
13 the end;

14 (2) in paragraph (7), by striking the period at
15 the end and inserting “; and”; and

16 (3) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(8) convene biannually to conduct a review of
18 United States Agency for Global Media affiliate and
19 grantee broadcasting activities and, when not less
20 than three Advisory Board members find a violation
21 of the broadcasting standards and principles listed
22 under section 303 pursuant to such a review, submit
23 to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House
24 of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign

1 Relations of the Senate a report describing each
2 such violation.”.

3 **SEC. 6. SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR FOR CERTAIN MATTERS**
4 **RELATING TO THE AGENCY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
6 effective date of this Act, the Chair of the Advisory Board
7 shall appoint a Special Investigator to submit the report
8 required by subsection (a). The individual appointed as
9 Special Investigator shall have expertise in human re-
10 sources, labor management, credentials screening, and
11 oversight and accountability.

12 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the effec-
13 tive date of this Act, the Special Investigator shall submit
14 to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Rep-
15 resentatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of
16 the Senate a report on—

17 (1) the adequacy of the Agency’s hiring and
18 employee vetting processes;

19 (2) the efficacy and feasibility of establishing an
20 Office of Inspector General at the Agency;

21 (3) its recommendations with respect to the
22 findings under paragraphs (1) and (2);

23 (4) a fiscal and administrative cost-benefit anal-
24 ysis of establishing an independent Office of Inspec-
25 tor General within the Agency;

1 (5) an evaluation of the adequacy of the De-
2 partment of State’s Office of Inspector General for
3 oversight and accountability purposes at the Agency,
4 with particular attention to investigation of matters
5 potentially criminal in nature;

6 (6) a review of all incidents pertaining to, inter
7 alia, fraud, misconduct, malfeasance, misstatements,
8 misrepresentations, and security breaches at the
9 Agency since January 1, 2019, and any disciplinary
10 actions taken with respect to them;

11 (7) an overview of the Department of State and
12 the Agency’s responsibilities regarding personnel and
13 whistleblower complaints, with particular focus on
14 areas for improvement;

15 (8) a determination as to whether the Agency
16 has adequately coordinated with the Department of
17 State regarding personnel misconduct and whistle-
18 blower complaints;

19 (9) the circumstances under which the Depart-
20 ment of State refers whistleblower complaints to the
21 Agency;

22 (10) any circumstances under which the De-
23 partment of State is involved in Agency hiring deci-
24 sions, including the Department’s Bureau of Diplo-

1 matic Security verifying Agency job applicants' for-
2 eign education credentials; and

3 (11) an assessment of the Department of State
4 and the Agency's security clearance process, includ-
5 ing outsourcing to the Defense Counterintelligence
6 and Security Agency.

7 **SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

8 This Act takes effect on January 1, 2025.

○