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House GOP takes aim at federal workers' remote work

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The SHOW UP Act would require federal agencies to reinstate remote and telework procedures from Dec. 31, 2019, before the pandemic began. | Elise Amendola/AP Photo

House Republicans are teeing up a series of pandemic-related bills, including one aimed at getting federal workers back into the office.

What's in the bill: The [SHOW UP Act](#) would require federal agencies to reinstate remote and telework procedures from Dec. 31, 2019, before the pandemic began. Those policies would not be able to be expanded until agencies submitted remote work plans to Congress with sign-off from the director of the Office of Personnel Management.

Federal agencies would also have to submit studies on the impacts of remote work during the pandemic and any plans to expand telework policies in the future. In order for the OPM director to certify such plans, the policies would have to meet several requirements, including:

- Having a substantial positive effect on the specific agency's performance.
- Lowering the agency's property costs, among others.
- Accelerating the dispersal of federal jobs across the country.
- Providing remote workers with secure access and network capacity as well as any equipment needed to ensure employees' productivity.

The details: Republicans have vowed to roll back pandemic-related policies that they consider detrimental and say are no longer necessary. The legislation was introduced earlier in the month by Rep. [James Comer](#) (R-Ky.), who chairs the House Oversight and Accountability Committee where the bill was referred. A [similar bill was introduced in the previous Congress](#) by Rep. [Yvette Herrell](#) (R-N.M.) but didn't gain any traction in the then-Democrat-controlled House.

“For years, Americans have suffered from the federal government's detrimental pandemic-era telework policies for federal bureaucrats,” [Comer said in a statement](#). “President Biden's unnecessary expansion of telework crippled the ability of departments and agencies to fulfill their responsibilities and created cumbersome backlogs. The federal government exists to serve the American people and these substantial delays for basic services are unacceptable.”

Comer pointed to delays at the IRS, VA and Social Security offices as examples of telework eroding agencies' effectiveness. House Oversight and Accountability ranking member [Jamie Raskin](#) (D-Md.) and House Rules Committee ranking member [Jim](#)

[McGovern](#) (D-Mass.) argued that understaffing and underfunding have contributed to those issues.

The reaction: Unions representing federal workers oppose the bill, including the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 700,000 federal and D.C. government workers.

“At a time when agencies across government are struggling to hire and retain a new generation of government employees, Congress should be focused on improving pay, benefits, and career development opportunities,” said National President Everett Kelley [in a statement](#). “Instead, we see message bills like the SHOW UP Act that denigrate the federal workforce and undermine recruitment and retention.”

The group’s legislative director, Julie Tippens, also [sent a letter to the Rules Committee chair and ranking member](#) ahead of Monday’s vote — arguing that HR 139 would “compel agencies to revoke provisions of existing collective bargaining agreements that were negotiated after the beginning of the pandemic,” among other areas of concern.

What’s next: The Rules Committee voted 9 to 3 to advance the bill out of the committee. The legislation is unlikely to move in the Senate, where Democrats retain the majority, but marks the beginning of Republicans’ focus on reshaping remote work rules.



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