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Congressional Oversight of Intelligence: Current Structure and Alternatives.

Accession Number : ADA560388

Title : Congressional Oversight of Intelligence: Current Structure and Alternatives

Descriptive Note : Congressional rept.

Corporate Author : LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

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Full Text : <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a560388.pdf>

Report Date : 14 Mar 2012

Pagination or Media Count : 41

Abstract : Interest in congressional oversight of intelligence has risen again in recent Congresses, in part because of disputes over reporting to Congress by intelligence community (IC) components on sensitive matters, including developments generated by the

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The changes in the oversight structure adopted or proposed in recent Congresses, however, also reflect earlier concerns, such as increasing independent auditing authority for the Government Accountability Office over the intelligence community, adding offices of inspectors general, clarifying reporting requirements to Congress, and restructuring Congress's oversight mechanisms. Along these lines, the House Democratic majority had pledged in the 110th Congress to enact the remaining recommendations from the U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, commonly known as the 9/11 Commission. The Commission's unanimous 2004 report set the stage for a reconsideration of congressional oversight, concluding that it was dysfunctional. The commission proposed two distinct solutions: (1) creation of a joint committee on intelligence, modeled after the defunct Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, with authority to report legislation to each chamber; or (2) enhanced status and power for the existing select committees on intelligence, by making them standing committees and granting each one both authorization and appropriations power. Neither of these occurred, although Congress has made a number of changes in its structure, organization, and authority to oversee this area. Despite these changes, several reports released during the 112th Congress by outside groups still concluded that oversight of intelligence remained dysfunctional and counterproductive. This report describes the current select committees on intelligence; characteristics and a model for a possible joint committee; recent actions by Congress; and obstacles affecting legislative oversight in the field.

Descriptors : *CONGRESS , *INTELLIGENCE , *LEGISLATION , *MONITORING , *ORGANIZATIONAL REALIGNMENT , *PANEL(COMMITTEE) , ACCOUNTABILITY , AUDITING , BARRIERS , BUDGETS , CONFLICT , DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE , INTERAGENCY COORDINATION , LEADERSHIP , REQUIREMENTS

Subject Categories : Administration and Management

Government and Political Science

Sociology and Law

Military Intelligence

Distribution Statement : APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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