

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7019

To establish the Office of Rural Prosperity, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 9, 2022

Ms. CRAIG (for herself, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mrs. AXNE, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. O'HALLERAN, and Mr. FEENSTRA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To establish the Office of Rural Prosperity, 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 “Rural Prosperity Act
5 of 2022”.

6 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF RURAL PROSPERITY.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established in the Execu-
8 tive Office of the President the Office of Rural Prosperity
9 (referred to in this section as the “Office”).

1 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Office is to ad-
2 dress the social, economic, and community well-being and
3 resilience of rural areas in the United States by addressing
4 unique structural challenges experienced by rural commu-
5 nities, including housing, education, healthcare, small
6 business development, and job creation.

7 (c) CHIEF RURAL ADVISOR.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Office shall be headed
9 by the Chief Rural Advisor, who shall be appointed
10 by the President.

11 (2) COMPENSATION.—The Chief Rural Advisor
12 shall be compensated at the rate provided for level
13 II of the Executive Schedule in section 5313 of title
14 5, United States Code.

15 (d) DUTIES.—The Chief Rural Advisor shall—

16 (1) not later than 1 year after the date of en-
17 actment of this Act, develop, and not less frequently
18 than every 3 years thereafter, update, a comprehen-
19 sive strategy for rural development across the Exec-
20 utive Branch, which shall—

21 (A) identify the most pressing priorities of
22 the United States to promote rural prosperity
23 in the 10-year period following the date of sub-
24 mission of the report under subsection (f)(2);
25 and

1 (B) describe the policy actions that will be
2 taken by the Federal Government, across Fed-
3 eral agencies and programs, to accelerate and
4 support social and economic prosperity in rural
5 areas;

6 (2) using the metrics developed under sub-
7 section (e), develop whole-of-government rec-
8 ommendations to improve the return on investment
9 of Federal resources and engagement relating to the
10 needs of rural areas in the United States;

11 (3) make recommendations to the President on
12 coordinating, streamlining, and leveraging Federal
13 investments in rural areas to increase the impact of
14 Federal dollars to improve economic opportunities
15 and the quality of life in rural areas in the United
16 States;

17 (4) coordinate, and improve community-level
18 outcomes and return on investment of, Federal en-
19 gagement relating to the needs of rural areas in the
20 United States with stakeholders based in rural com-
21 munities, including—

22 (A) agricultural organizations;

23 (B) small businesses;

24 (C) education and training institutions;

25 (D) health care providers;

1 (E) telecommunications services providers;

2 (F) electric service providers;

3 (G) transportation providers;

4 (H) research and land-grant institutions;

5 (I) law enforcement agencies;

6 (J) State, local, and Tribal governments

7 (including a Native village and a Native Cor-

8 poration, as those terms are defined in section

9 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

10 (43 U.S.C. 1602)); and

11 (K) nongovernmental organizations;

12 (5) coordinate Federal efforts directed toward

13 the growth and development of rural geographic re-

14 gions that encompass metropolitan and nonmetro-

15 politan areas;

16 (6) identify and facilitate rural economic oppor-

17 tunities associated with energy transitions, outdoor

18 recreation, and other conservation-related activities;

19 (7) identify common economic and social chal-

20 lenges faced by rural communities that could be

21 overcome through better coordination of existing

22 Federal and non-Federal resources; and

23 (8) convene public hearings (including with the

24 power to call witnesses and request documents from

25 Federal agencies) on the state of rural areas in the

1 United States and the comprehensive strategy for
2 rural development developed under paragraph (1).

3 (e) METRICS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
5 the date of enactment of this Act, the Chief Rural
6 Advisor shall develop metrics to measure the effect
7 of Federal programs on rural areas in the United
8 States.

9 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—In developing the metrics
10 under paragraph (1), the Chief Rural Advisor
11 shall—

12 (A) develop a comprehensive list of feder-
13 ally administered programs that are available to
14 individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations,
15 units of local government, or other entities lo-
16 cated in rural areas in the United States; and

17 (B) develop a comprehensive set of
18 metrics, including—

19 (i) employment in a rural area;

20 (ii) inequality in a rural area;

21 (iii) economic competitiveness of a
22 rural area;

23 (iv) inflation or deflation in a rural
24 area;

- 1 (v) housing availability and costs in a
2 rural area;
3 (vi) access to health care or telehealth
4 in a rural area;
5 (vii) the rate of small business
6 startups in a rural area;
7 (viii) educational attainment in a
8 rural area;
9 (ix) workforce participation in a rural
10 area; and
11 (x) other metrics, as determined ap-
12 propriate by the Chief Rural Advisor.

13 (3) AVAILABILITY OF DATA OF OTHER FED-
14 ERAL AGENCIES.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of devel-
16 oping metrics under paragraph (1), the head of
17 any other Federal agency shall provide to the
18 Chief Rural Advisor, on request by the Chief
19 Rural Advisor and at no cost to the Office, any
20 data relating to the work of the Office collected
21 by the Federal agency.

22 (B) PRIVACY AND SECURITY.—The Chief
23 Rural Advisor shall take any necessary steps to
24 maintain the privacy and security of data pro-
25 vided under subparagraph (A).

1 (f) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Chief Rural Advi-
2 sor shall—

3 (1) not later than 1 year after establishing the
4 metrics under subsection (e), and not less frequently
5 than annually thereafter—

6 (A) prepare a report describing the effect
7 that the programs on the list developed under
8 subsection (e)(2)(A) have on rural areas, based
9 on the metrics developed under subsection
10 (e)(2)(B), with demographic breakdowns by
11 race, age, and geographic region; and

12 (B) submit to the Committee on Agri-
13 culture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Com-
14 mittee on Appropriations of the Senate and the
15 Committee on Agriculture and the Committee
16 on Appropriations of the House of Representa-
17 tives, and make publicly available, the report
18 prepared under subparagraph (A); and

19 (2) not later than 1 year after the date of en-
20 actment of this Act, and not less frequently than
21 every 3 years thereafter, submit to the Committee
22 on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the
23 Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the
24 Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on
25 Appropriations of the House of Representatives the

1 comprehensive strategy for rural development devel-
2 oped under subsection (d)(1).

3 (g) FUNDING.—This section shall be carried out
4 using existing amounts otherwise available to the Execu-
5 tive Office of the President.

6 (h) SAVINGS PROVISION.—Nothing in this section au-
7 thorizes the hiring of additional staff.

8 **SEC. 3. RURAL PROSPERITY COUNCIL.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a Rural Pros-
10 perity Council (referred to in this section as the “Coun-
11 cil”).

12 (b) CHAIR.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall serve
13 as the Chair of the Council.

14 (c) MEMBERS.—The Council shall be composed of the
15 heads of the following executive branch departments,
16 agencies, and offices:

17 (1) The Office of Rural Prosperity.

18 (2) The Department of Agriculture.

19 (3) The Department of the Treasury.

20 (4) The Department of Defense.

21 (5) The Department of Justice.

22 (6) The Bureau of Indian Affairs.

23 (7) The Department of the Interior.

24 (8) The Department of Commerce.

25 (9) The Economic Development Administration.

1 (10) The Department of Labor.

2 (11) The Department of Health and Human
3 Services.

4 (12) The Department of Housing and Urban
5 Development.

6 (13) The Department of Transportation.

7 (14) The Department of Energy.

8 (15) The Department of Education.

9 (16) The Department of Veterans Affairs.

10 (17) The Department of Homeland Security.

11 (18) The Environmental Protection Agency.

12 (19) The Federal Communications Commission.

13 (20) The Office of Management and Budget.

14 (21) The Office of Science and Technology Pol-
15 icy.

16 (22) The Office of National Drug Control Pol-
17 icy.

18 (23) The Council of Economic Advisers.

19 (24) The Domestic Policy Council.

20 (25) The National Economic Council.

21 (26) The Small Business Administration.

22 (27) The Council on Environmental Quality.

23 (d) DESIGNEES.—A member of the Council may des-
24 ignate, to perform the Council functions of the member,
25 a senior-level official who is—

1 (1) part of the department, agency, or office of
2 the member; and

3 (2) a full-time officer or employee of the Fed-
4 eral Government.

5 (e) DUTIES.—The Council shall—

6 (1) ensure coordination among Federal agen-
7 cies, States, units of local government, nonprofit or-
8 ganizations, and other stakeholders, as appropriate,
9 in addressing the needs of rural areas in the United
10 States;

11 (2) coordinate Federal efforts directed toward
12 the growth and development of rural geographic re-
13 gions that encompass both metropolitan and non-
14 metropolitan areas;

15 (3) identify and facilitate rural economic oppor-
16 tunities associated with energy transitions, outdoor
17 recreation, and other conservation-related activities;

18 (4) make recommendations to the President,
19 acting through the Chief Rural Advisor, on stream-
20 lining and leveraging Federal investments in rural
21 areas, where appropriate, to increase the impact of
22 Federal dollars and create economic opportunities to
23 improve the quality of life in rural areas in the
24 United States;

1 (5) provide a means for discussion and resolu-
2 tion of disputes between Federal agencies with re-
3 gard to programs that address the needs of rural
4 areas in the United States; and

5 (6) develop plans and strategies to address the
6 needs of rural areas in the United States.

7 (f) PUBLIC OUTREACH.—Not less frequently than
8 twice annually, the Council shall hold public meetings in
9 a rural community for the purpose of—

10 (1) soliciting feedback from the public, units of
11 local government, Indian Tribes, and dislocated
12 workers on concerns relating to the social, economic,
13 and community well-being and resilience of rural
14 areas; and

15 (2) soliciting recommendations on actions the
16 departments, agencies, and offices represented on
17 the Council may consider to support the economic
18 development of rural communities.

19 **SEC. 4. RURAL PROSPERITY ACTION PLAN.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture (re-
21 ferred to in this section as the “Secretary”), in coordina-
22 tion with the Under Secretary for Rural Development,
23 shall develop a rural prosperity action plan (referred to
24 in this section as the “action plan”), which shall describe
25 the actions to be carried out by the Secretary for the pur-

1 poses of addressing the social, economic, and community
2 well-being and resilience of rural areas in the United
3 States by addressing unique structural challenges experi-
4 enced by rural communities.

5 (b) COORDINATION.—Each activity carried out under
6 this section shall be carried out in coordination with the
7 Office of Rural Prosperity.

8 (c) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND FUNDING.—The
9 Secretary shall provide administrative support and fund-
10 ing in the development of the action plan, to the extent
11 permitted by law and using appropriations available to the
12 Secretary as of the date of enactment of this Act.

13 (d) ACTIVITIES.—In developing the action plan, the
14 Secretary shall—

15 (1) examine each rural development activity
16 carried out by the Secretary as of the date of enact-
17 ment of this Act; and

18 (2) identify regulatory and policy changes that
19 could be made by the Secretary that would accom-
20 plish the goals described in subsection (a), including
21 changes that would—

22 (A) remove barriers to economic prosperity
23 and quality of life in rural areas of the United
24 States;

1 (B) strengthen and expand educational op-
2 portunities for students in rural communities,
3 particularly in agricultural education, science,
4 technology, engineering, and mathematics;

5 (C) empower the State, local, and Tribal
6 agencies that implement rural economic devel-
7 opment, agricultural, and environmental pro-
8 grams to tailor those programs to relevant re-
9 gional circumstances;

10 (D) respect the unique circumstances of
11 small businesses that serve rural communities
12 and the unique business structures and regional
13 diversity of farms and ranches;

14 (E) ensure access to a reliable workforce
15 and increase employment opportunities in rural-
16 focused businesses, including agriculture;

17 (F) promote the preservation of family
18 farms as they are passed from generation to
19 generation;

20 (G) ensure that private property rights of
21 water users are not encumbered when the water
22 users attempt to secure permits to operate on
23 Federal land;

24 (H) improve food safety and ensure that
25 regulations and policies implementing Federal

1 food safety laws are based on science and ac-
2 count for the unique circumstances of farms
3 and ranches;

4 (I) encourage the production, export, and
5 use of domestically produced agricultural prod-
6 ucts;

7 (J) further the energy security of the
8 United States in the rural landscape;

9 (K) address hurdles associated with access
10 to resources on Federal land for rural commu-
11 nities that rely on cattle grazing, timber har-
12 vests, mining, recreation, and other multiple
13 uses;

14 (L) identify and facilitate rural economic
15 opportunities associated with energy develop-
16 ment, outdoor recreation, and other conserva-
17 tion-related activities; and

18 (M) coordinate and improve the effective-
19 ness of Federal engagement with rural stake-
20 holders, including agricultural organizations,
21 small businesses, education and training institu-
22 tions, health care providers, telecommunications
23 services providers, research and land-grant in-
24 stitutions, law enforcement, State, local, and
25 Tribal governments, and nongovernmental orga-

1 nizations, regarding the needs of rural areas of
2 the United States.

3 (e) SUBMISSION OF ACTION PLAN.—Not later than
4 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
5 retary shall submit the action plan, including rec-
6 ommendations for regulatory and policy changes identified
7 under subsection (d)(2) that the Secretary considers ap-
8 propriate, to—

9 (1) the Chief Rural Advisor;

10 (2) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
11 and Forestry of the Senate;

12 (3) the Committee on Appropriations of the
13 Senate;

14 (4) the Committee on Agriculture of the House
15 of Representatives; and

16 (5) the Committee on Appropriations of the
17 House of Representatives.

18 (f) PROGRESS REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after
19 the action plan is submitted in accordance with subsection
20 (e), the Secretary shall submit a report describing the
21 progress of the Secretary in meeting benchmarks de-
22 scribed in the action plan to—

23 (1) the Chief Rural Advisor;

24 (2) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
25 and Forestry of the Senate;

1 (3) the Committee on Appropriations of the
2 Senate;

3 (4) the Committee on Agriculture of the House
4 of Representatives; and

5 (5) the Committee on Appropriations of the
6 House of Representatives.

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