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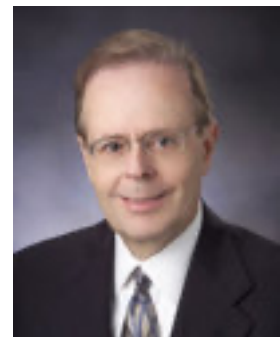
Sunday, September 7, 2008

Plain Language in Government Communication

By [InternationalLaw Blogger](#)

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Professor Joe Kimble of Thomas Cooley School of Law advises us of efforts to move [S. 2291--the Plain Language in Government Communications Act](#) to the floor of the U.S. Senate for a vote. The bill would require the U.S. federal government to write more clearly in any letter, publication, or form that it sends to the public about federal requirements, programs, and services. (The bill does not cover federal agency regulations.)



Using plain language improves government communicates with citizens. Research shows that plain language saves time and money, gets better results, reduces confusion and frustration, and avoids call-backs and mistakes.

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a plain-language bill last year (H.R. 3548) by a vote of 376 to 1. The companion bill ([S. 2291](#)) passed out of the U.S. Senate committee and is ready for a vote by the full Senate, but a staff member working for Senator Bob Bennett of Utah **has placed the bill on hold for no obvious good reasons.** (Must be afraid of plain language, I guess!)

If you are in the United States, here are three ways to help:

1. Send a letter to Senator Bennett supporting the bill. (If you are an attorney or law professor, put that in the letter too.) Tell them there's no conflict between clarity and precision and explain some of the benefits of plain language. The letter does not need to be long -- even a sentence or two is enough. Mail the letter to Hon. Bob Bennett, 431 Dirksen Building, Washington, DC 20510-4403. If you can, please also fax it to the attention of Shawn Gunnarson at (202) 228-1168.
2. If you live in California, call Senator Feinstein's office. She chairs the Rules Committee. Tell her office that [S. 2291](#) **will benefit the American people, and it's being held up at the whim of a staff attorney in Senator Bennett's office.** Ask her to intervene as chair of the Rules Committee. The number for her D.C. office is (202) 224-3841.

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3. There are several Republican cosponsors. If you live in any of the states that these cosponsors represent, call the D.C. office and ask them to please talk to Bennett's office to get it moving again.

- Susan Collins, **Maine** (202) 224-2523
- Thad Cochran, **Missouri** 202-224-5054
- George Voinovich, **Ohio** (202) 224-3353

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