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[H.R.4401, Amplifying Local Efforts to Root out Terror Act of 2016, or the “ALERT Act of 2016”, as amended](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, February 29, 2016, the House will consider [H.R. 4401](#), the Amplifying Local Efforts to Root out Terror Act of 2016, or the ALERT Act of 2016, as amended. The bill was introduced on February 1, 2016, by Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R-GA) and was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security, which order the bill reported, by voice vote, on February 2, 2016.

SUMMARY

H.R. 4401 authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to provide training for personnel at state and major urban area fusion centers to administer community awareness briefings and related activities for: countering violent extremism (CVE); identifying and reporting suspicious activities; and identifying terrorism threats, including those related to foreign fighters. In addition, this legislation requires the Secretary to assess DHS efforts to support CVE activities at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels, and directs the Department to report to Congress on the number and level of security clearances held by state, local, tribal, and territorial government personnel.

BACKGROUND

In March 2015, the Committee on Homeland Security launched a bipartisan Task Force on Combatting Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel. Eight Members of Congress were charged with examining the threat to the United States from foreign fighters. The Task Force assessed domestic and overseas efforts to obstruct terrorist travel and identified potential security gaps. They issued a final report on September 29, 2015.¹

The Task Force found that state and local fusion centers are underutilized by federal law enforcement nationwide when it comes to combating the threat from foreign fighters and terrorist travel generally.² Fusion centers serve as a focal point within state and local environments for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information between the federal government and state, local,

¹ See [Final Report on the Task Force on Combatting Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel](#) at 2.

² *Id.* at 31.

tribal, territorial, and private sector partners.³ In addition, the Task Force found that too often, fusion center personnel do not have access to necessary information and intelligence because they lack appropriate security clearances, insufficient security clearance levels, or delays in security clearance processing.

It was recommended that federal law enforcement better leverage the National Network of Fusion Centers with terrorist-travel related matters, federal authorities notify a local fusion center when terrorism-related activity is within an area of operation, and fusion centers are made aware when an individual returning from overseas terrorist sanctuaries comes back to a local jurisdiction. In addition, a thorough review of security clearance processes was suggested.⁴

According to the bill sponsor, “Our local law enforcement is crucial to our national security, and they are too often overlooked as a valuable asset in fighting against acts of terrorism. That’s why I introduced the ALERT Act, to provide training, improve coordination, and increase community awareness of the foreign fighter threat. This bill evolved from months of research and investigation, as a member of the Committee on Homeland Security’s Foreign Fighter Task Force. As the threats against America by radical Islamists increases, fighting terrorism cannot be a singular effort, conducted by one element of our federal government; it requires the cooperation and coordination of multiple levels of all governments, and local community participation. My legislation will not, in itself, end the threat of terrorism against our nation, but it will add to the critical resources already in our communities.

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate is currently unavailable. However H.R 4401 does not authorize new funding and requires the Secretary to carry out these requirements using currently appropriated funds.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jake Vreeburg](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 3-1555.

³ See [“State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers”](#) on Department of Homeland Security website

⁴ See [Final Report on the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel](#) at 31-32.