

The DHS Cybersecurity Workforce Recruitment and Retention Act of 2014.

Bill summary: To address the critical challenges the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) faces in hiring and retaining critically needed cybersecurity experts, this bill would give the Secretary of Homeland Security hiring and compensation authorities for cybersecurity experts like those of the Secretary of Defense.

The problem: Hiring and retaining top cybersecurity talent for the Federal Government is extremely difficult. There simply aren't enough specially-trained experts to fill all of the vacant positions in government – a problem that is compounded by the fact that the private sector is also seeking critically needed cybersecurity professionals. A GAO report (GAO-12-8) recognizes the obvious -- government agencies in particular have difficulty hiring cybersecurity experts because they compete with the private sector and sometimes with each other, as some government agencies can hire more quickly and pay more for the same position.

Existing law: Under existing law, 10 USC Sections 1601-1603, the Department of Defense, including the National Security Agency, has personnel authorities that have been critically important in their recruitment and retention of cyber professionals for years. These authorities have enabled the DOD and NSA to build and maintain a strong cybersecurity workforce. Specifically, the Secretary of Defense can establish positions in the excepted service that would permit the Secretary to make direct appointments, set rates of basic pay, and provide additional compensation, benefits, incentives, and allowances. Essentially these authorities allow DOD and NSA to hire faster, pay more, and offer retention bonuses. Even though DHS also has a broad cybersecurity mission, it does not currently have any of these hiring authorities in law.

This bill: This bill would address this problem by giving the Secretary of Homeland Security recruitment and retention authorities for cybersecurity professionals commensurate with those of the Secretary of Defense as described above. With these tools, DHS will be able to hire at speed and salaries comparable to DOD. These authorities are needed by DHS to address the ever growing cyber threat to our national and economic security. The bill would also require the Secretary to report annually on the progress of the program and to ensure adequate transparency and oversight of the recruitment and retention program.