



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

May 17, 2004

H.R. 1678
Stop Terrorist and Military Hoaxes Act of 2004

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on May 12, 2004

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1678 would have no significant cost to the federal government. Enacting H.R. 1678 could affect direct spending and receipts, but CBO estimates that any impact on direct spending and receipts would not be significant. H.R. 1678 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 1678 would establish new federal crimes for the perpetration of hoaxes involving weapons of mass destruction and similar threats, and for the communication of false information about U.S. forces involved in armed conflict. Offenders would be subject to imprisonment, as well as criminal and civil fines.

Under the provisions of H.R. 1678, the government would be able to pursue cases involving hoaxes that it otherwise would not be able to prosecute. Because there are similar prohibitions on hoaxes in current law, however, CBO expects that the bill's provisions would probably affect a small number of additional cases. Thus, any increase in costs for law enforcement, court proceedings, or prison operations would not be significant. Any such costs would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Because those prosecuted and convicted under H.R. 1678 could be subject to fines, the federal government might collect additional fines if the legislation is enacted. Collections of civil fines are recorded in the budget as revenues. Criminal fines are deposited as receipts in the Crime Victims Fund and later spent. CBO expects that any additional revenues and direct spending would be negligible because of the small number of cases involved.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Mark Grabowicz. This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.