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(Original Signature of Member)

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to enhance oversight of nationally recognized statistical rating organizations, and for other purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. KANJORSKI introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**A BILL**

To amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to enhance oversight of nationally recognized statistical rating organizations, 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 title may be cited as the “Accountability and  
5       Transparency in Rating Agencies Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ENHANCED REGULATION OF NATIONALLY RECOG-**  
2 **NIZED STATISTICAL RATING ORGANIZA-**  
3 **TIONS.**

4 Section 15E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934  
5 (15 U.S.C. 78o-7) is amended—

6 (1) in subsection (a)—

7 (A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “fur-  
8 nish to” and inserting “file with”;

9 (B) in paragraph (2)(A), by striking “fur-  
10 nished to” and inserting “filed with”; and

11 (C) in paragraph (2)(B)(i)(II), by striking  
12 “furnished to” and inserting “filed with”;

13 (2) in subsection (b)—

14 (A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “fur-  
15 nished” and inserting “filed” and by striking  
16 “furnishing” and inserting “filing”;

17 (B) in paragraph (1)(B), by striking “fur-  
18 nishing” and inserting “filing”; and

19 (C) in the first sentence of paragraph (2),  
20 by striking “furnish to” and inserting “file  
21 with”;

22 (3) in subsection (c)—

23 (A) paragraph (2)—

24 (i) in the second sentence by inserting  
25 “including the requirements of this sec-

1           tion,” after “Notwithstanding any other  
2           provision of law,”; and

3           (ii) by inserting before the period at  
4           the end of the last sentence “, provided  
5           that this paragraph does not afford a de-  
6           fense against any action or proceeding  
7           brought by the Commission to enforce the  
8           antifraud provision of the securities laws”;  
9           (B) by adding at the end the following new  
10          paragraph:

11          “(3) REVIEW OF INTERNAL PROCESSES FOR  
12          DETERMINING CREDIT RATINGS.—

13                 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall  
14                 review credit ratings issued by, and the policies,  
15                 procedures, and methodologies employed by,  
16                 each nationally recognized statistical rating or-  
17                 ganization to ensure that—

18                         “(i) the nationally recognized statis-  
19                         tical rating organization has established  
20                         and documented a system of internal con-  
21                         trols, due diligence and implementation of  
22                         methodologies for determining credit rat-  
23                         ings, taking into consideration such factors  
24                         as the Commission may prescribe by rule;

1           “(ii) the nationally recognized statis-  
2           tical rating organization adheres to such  
3           system; and

4           “(iii) the public disclosures of the na-  
5           tionally recognized statistical rating orga-  
6           nization required under this section about  
7           its ratings, methodologies, and procedures  
8           are consistent with such system.

9           “(B) MANNER AND FREQUENCY.—The  
10          Commission shall conduct reviews required by  
11          this paragraph no less frequently than annually  
12          in a manner to be determined by the Commis-  
13          sion.

14          “(4) PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COM-  
15          MISSION.—Each nationally recognized statistical rat-  
16          ing organization shall make available and maintain  
17          such records and information, for such a period of  
18          time, as the Commission may prescribe, by rule, as  
19          necessary for the Commission to conduct the reviews  
20          under paragraph (3).”

21          (4) in subsection (d)—

22                 (A) in the heading, by inserting “FINE,”  
23                 after “CENSURE,”;

24                 (B) by striking “shall censure” and all  
25                 that follows through “revocation” and inserting

1 the following: “shall censure, fine in accordance  
2 with section 21B(a), place limitations on the ac-  
3 tivities, functions, or operations of, suspend for  
4 a period not exceeding 12 months, or revoke the  
5 registration of any nationally recognized statis-  
6 tical rating organization (or with respect to any  
7 person who is associated, who is seeking to be-  
8 come associated, or, at the time of the alleged  
9 misconduct, who was associated or was seeking  
10 to become associated with a nationally recog-  
11 nized statistical rating organization, the Com-  
12 mission, by order, shall censure, fine in accord-  
13 ance with section 21B(a), place limitations on  
14 the activities or functions of such person, sus-  
15 pend for a period not exceeding 12 months, or  
16 bar such person from being associated with a  
17 nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
18 tion), if the Commission finds, on the record  
19 after notice and opportunity for hearing, that  
20 such censure, fine, placing of limitations, bar,  
21 suspension, or revocation”;

22 (C) in paragraph (2), by striking “fur-  
23 nished to” and inserting “filed with”;

24 (D) in paragraph (4)—

1 (i) by striking “furnish” and inserting  
2 “file”;

3 (ii) by striking “or” at the end;

4 (E) in paragraph (5), by striking the pe-  
5 riod at the end; and

6 (F) by adding at the end the following:

7 “(6) has failed reasonably to supervise another  
8 person who commits a violation of the securities laws  
9 or any rules of the Municipal Securities Rulemaking  
10 Board if such other person is subject to his or her  
11 supervision, except that no person shall be deemed  
12 to have failed reasonably to supervise any other per-  
13 son under this paragraph, if—

14 “(A) there have been established proce-  
15 dures, and a system for applying such proce-  
16 dures, which would reasonably be expected to  
17 prevent and detect, insofar as practicable, any  
18 such violation by such other person, and

19 “(B) such person has reasonably dis-  
20 charged the duties and obligations incumbent  
21 upon him or her by reason of such procedures  
22 and system without reasonable cause to believe  
23 that such procedures and system were not being  
24 complied with; or

1           “(7) fails to conduct sufficient surveillance to  
2           ensure that credit ratings remain current and reli-  
3           able, as applicable.”;

4           (5) in subsection (e)—

5                 (A) by striking paragraph (1); and

6                 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “(2)  
7           COMMISSION AUTHORITY.—” and moving the  
8           text of such paragraph to follow the heading of  
9           subsection (e);

10           (6) by amending subsection (h) to read as fol-  
11           lows:

12           “(h) CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, ORGANIZATION, AND  
13           MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—

14                 “(1) BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—

15                         “(A) IN GENERAL.—Each nationally recog-  
16                         nized statistical rating organization or its par-  
17                         ent entity shall have a board of directors.

18                         “(B) INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS.—At least  
19                          $\frac{1}{3}$  of such board, but no less than 2 of the  
20                         members of the board of directors, shall be  
21                         independent directors. In order to be considered  
22                         independent for purposes of this subsection, a  
23                         director of a nationally recognized statistical  
24                         rating organization may not, other than in his

1 or her capacity as a member of the board of di-  
2 rectors or any committee thereof—

3 “(i) accept any consulting, advisory,  
4 or other compensatory fee from the nation-  
5 ally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
6 tion; or

7 “(ii) be a person associated with the  
8 nationally recognized statistical rating or-  
9 ganization or with any affiliated company  
10 thereof.

11 “(C) COMPENSATION AND TERM.—The  
12 compensation of the independent directors shall  
13 not be linked to the business performance of the  
14 nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
15 tion and shall be arranged so as to ensure the  
16 independence of their judgment. The term of  
17 office of the independent directors shall be for  
18 a pre-agreed fixed period not exceeding 5 years  
19 and shall not be renewable.

20 “(D) DUTIES.—In addition to the overall  
21 responsibility of the board of directors, the  
22 board shall oversee—

23 “(i) the establishment, maintenance,  
24 and enforcement of policies and procedures  
25 for determining credit ratings;

1                   “(ii) the establishment, maintenance,  
2                   and enforcement of policies and procedures  
3                   to address, manage, and disclose any con-  
4                   flicts of interest;

5                   “(iii) the effectiveness of the internal  
6                   control system with respect to policies and  
7                   procedures for determining credit ratings;  
8                   and

9                   “(iv) the compensation and promotion  
10                  policies and practices of the nationally rec-  
11                  ognized statistical rating organization.

12                  “(2) ORGANIZATION POLICIES AND PROCE-  
13                  DURES.—Each nationally recognized statistical rat-  
14                  ing organization shall establish, maintain, and en-  
15                  force written policies and procedures reasonably de-  
16                  signed, taking into consideration the nature of the  
17                  business of the nationally recognized statistical rat-  
18                  ing organization and affiliated persons and affiliated  
19                  companies thereof, to address, manage, and disclose  
20                  any conflicts of interest that can arise from such  
21                  business.

22                  “(3) COMMISSION RULES.—The Commission  
23                  shall issue rules to prohibit, or require the manage-  
24                  ment and disclosure of, any conflicts of interest re-  
25                  lating to the issuance of credit ratings by a nation-

1       ally recognized statistical rating organization, includ-  
2       ing—

3               “(A) conflicts of interest relating to the  
4               manner in which a nationally recognized statis-  
5               tical rating organization is compensated by the  
6               obligor, or any affiliate of the obligor, for  
7               issuing credit ratings or providing related serv-  
8               ices;

9               “(B) conflicts of interest relating to the  
10              provision of consulting, advisory, or other serv-  
11              ices by a nationally recognized statistical rating  
12              organization, or any person associated with  
13              such nationally recognized statistical rating or-  
14              ganization, to the obligor, or any affiliate of the  
15              obligor;

16             “(C) disclosure of conflicts of interests re-  
17             lating to business relationships, ownership in-  
18             terests, and affiliations of nationally recognized  
19             statistical rating organization board members  
20             with obligors, or any other financial or personal  
21             interests between a nationally recognized statis-  
22             tical rating organization, or any person associ-  
23             ated with such nationally recognized statistical  
24             rating organization, and the obligor, or any af-  
25             filiate of the obligor;

1           “(D) disclosure of conflicts of interests re-  
2 relating to any affiliation of a nationally recog-  
3 nized statistical rating organization, or any per-  
4 son associated with such nationally recognized  
5 statistical rating organization, with any person  
6 who underwrites securities, money market in-  
7 struments, or other instruments that are the  
8 subject of a credit rating;

9           “(E) a requirement that each nationally  
10 recognized statistical rating organization dis-  
11 close on such organization’s website a consoli-  
12 dated report at the end of each fiscal year that  
13 shows—

14           “(i) the percent of net revenue earned  
15 by the nationally recognized statistical rat-  
16 ing organization or an affiliate of a nation-  
17 ally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
18 tion, or any person associated with a na-  
19 tionally recognized statistical rating orga-  
20 nization, to the extent determined appro-  
21 priate by the Commission, for that fiscal  
22 year for providing services and products  
23 other than credit rating services to each  
24 person who paid for a credit rating; and

1           “(ii) the relative standing of each per-  
2           son who paid for a credit rating that was  
3           outstanding as of the end of the fiscal year  
4           in terms of the amount of net revenue  
5           earned by the nationally recognized statis-  
6           tical rating organization attributable to  
7           each such person and classified by the  
8           highest 5, 10, 25, and 50 percentiles and  
9           lowest 50 and 25 percentiles.

10           “(F) rules providing for the establishment  
11           of a system of payment for each nationally rec-  
12           ognized statistical rating organization that re-  
13           quires that payments are structured in a man-  
14           ner designed to ensure that the nationally rec-  
15           ognized statistical rating organization conducts  
16           accurate and reliable surveillance of ratings  
17           over time, as applicable, and that incentives for  
18           reliable ratings are in place;

19           “(G) a requirement that a nationally rec-  
20           ognized statistical rating organization disclose  
21           with the publication of a credit rating the type  
22           and number of credit ratings it has provided to  
23           the person being rated or affiliates of such per-  
24           son, the fees it has billed for the credit rating,  
25           and the aggregate amount of net revenue

1 earned by the nationally recognized statistical  
2 rating in the preceding 2 fiscal years attrib-  
3 utable to the person being rated and its affili-  
4 ates; and

5 “(H) any other potential conflict of inter-  
6 est, as the Commission determines necessary or  
7 appropriate in the public interest or for the pro-  
8 tection of investors.

9 “(4) LOOK-BACK REQUIREMENT.—

10 “(A) REVIEW BY THE NATIONALLY RECOG-  
11 NIZED STATISTICAL RATING ORGANIZATION.—

12 Each nationally recognized statistical rating or-  
13 ganization shall establish, maintain, and enforce  
14 policies and procedures reasonably designed to  
15 ensure that, in any case in which an employee  
16 of a person subject to a credit rating of the na-  
17 tionally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
18 tion or the issuer, underwriter, or sponsor of a  
19 security or money market instrument subject to  
20 a credit rating of the nationally recognized sta-  
21 tistical rating organization was employed by the  
22 nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
23 tion and participated in any capacity in deter-  
24 mining credit ratings for the person or the se-  
25 curities or money market instruments during

1           the 1-year period preceding the date an action  
2           was taken with respect to the credit rating, the  
3           nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
4           tion shall—

5                   “(i) conduct a review to determine  
6                   whether any conflicts of interest of the em-  
7                   ployee influenced the credit rating; and

8                   “(ii) take action to revise the rating if  
9                   appropriate, in accordance with such rules  
10                  as the Commission shall prescribe.

11               “(B) REVIEW BY COMMISSION.—

12                   “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Commission  
13                   shall conduct periodic reviews of the poli-  
14                   cies described in subparagraph (A) and the  
15                   implementation of the policies at each na-  
16                   tionally recognized statistical rating orga-  
17                   nization to ensure they are reasonably de-  
18                   signed and implemented to most effectively  
19                   eliminate conflicts of interest.

20                   “(ii) TIMING OF REVIEWS.—The Com-  
21                   mission shall review the code of ethics and  
22                   conflict of interest policy of each nationally  
23                   recognized statistical rating organization

24                   —

1                   “(I) not less frequently than an-  
2                   nually; and

3                   “(II) whenever such policies are  
4                   materially modified or amended.

5                   “(5) REPORT TO COMMISSION ON CERTAIN EM-  
6                   PLOYMENT TRANSITIONS.—

7                   “(A) REPORT REQUIRED.—Each nationally  
8                   recognized statistical rating organization shall  
9                   report to the Commission any case such organi-  
10                  zation knows or can reasonably be expected to  
11                  know where a former employee of such organi-  
12                  zation obtains employment with any issuer, un-  
13                  derwriter, or sponsor of a security or money  
14                  market instrument for which the organization  
15                  issued a credit rating during the 12-month pe-  
16                  riod prior to such employment, if such em-  
17                  ployee—

18                  “(i) was an officer of such organiza-  
19                  tion;

20                  “(ii) participated in any capacity in  
21                  determining credit ratings for such issuer,  
22                  underwriter, or sponsor; or

23                  “(iii) supervised an employee de-  
24                  scribed un subparagraph (B).

1           “(B) PUBLIC DISCLOSURE.—Upon receiv-  
2           ing such a report, the Commission shall make  
3           such information publicly available.”;

4           (7) by amending subsection (j) to read as fol-  
5           lows:

6           “(j) DESIGNATION OF COMPLIANCE OFFICER.—

7           “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each nationally recognized  
8           statistical rating organization shall designate an in-  
9           dividual to serve as a compliance officer.

10          “(2) DUTIES.—The compliance officer shall—

11           “(A) report directly to the board of the na-  
12           tionally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
13           tion;

14           “(B) review compliance with policies and  
15           procedures to manage conflicts of interest and  
16           assess the risk that the compliance (or lack of  
17           such compliance) may compromise the integrity  
18           of the credit rating process;

19           “(C) review compliance with internal con-  
20           trols with respect to the procedures and meth-  
21           odologies for determining credit ratings, includ-  
22           ing quantitative models and qualitative inputs  
23           used in the rating process, and assess the risk  
24           that such compliance with the internal controls  
25           (or lack of such compliance) may compromise

1 the integrity and quality of the credit rating  
2 process;

3 “(D) in consultation with the board of the  
4 nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
5 tion, resolve any conflicts of interest that may  
6 arise;

7 “(E) be responsible for administering the  
8 policies and procedures required to be estab-  
9 lished pursuant to this section;

10 “(F) ensure compliance with securities  
11 laws and the rules and regulations issued there-  
12 under, including rules prescribed by the Com-  
13 mission pursuant to this section; and

14 “(G) shall establish procedures—

15 “(i) for the receipt, retention, and  
16 treatment of complaints regarding credit  
17 ratings, models, methodologies, and com-  
18 pliance with the securities laws and the  
19 policies and procedures required under this  
20 section;

21 “(ii) for the receipt, retention, and  
22 treatment of confidential, anonymous com-  
23 plaints by employees, issuers, and inves-  
24 tors;

1           “(iii) for the remediation of non-com-  
2           pliance issues found during compliance of-  
3           fice reviews, the reviews required under  
4           paragraph (7), internal or external audit  
5           findings, self-reported errors, or through  
6           validated complaints; and

7           “(iv) designed so that ratings that the  
8           nationally recognized statistical rating or-  
9           ganization disseminates reflect consider-  
10          ation of all information that comes to the  
11          attention of and is believed by the nation-  
12          ally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
13          tion to be relevant, in a manner generally  
14          consistent with the nationally recognized  
15          statistical rating organization’s published  
16          rating methodology, including information  
17          which is provided, received, or otherwise  
18          obtained from issuer and non-issuer  
19          sources, such as investors, the media, and  
20          other interested or informed parties.

21           “(3) LIMITATIONS.—The compliance officer  
22          shall not, while serving in that capacity—

23           “(A) determine credit ratings;

24           “(B) participate in the establishment of  
25          the procedures and methodologies or the quan-

1           titative models and qualitative inputs used to  
2           determine credit ratings;

3           “(C) perform marketing or sales functions;

4           or

5           “(D) participate in establishing compensa-  
6           tion levels, other than for employees working  
7           for the compliance officer.

8           “(4) ANNUAL REPORTS REQUIRED.—The com-  
9           pliance officer shall annually prepare and sign a re-  
10          port on the compliance of the nationally recognized  
11          statistical rating organization with the securities  
12          laws and such organization’s internal policies and  
13          procedures, including its code of ethics and conflict  
14          of interest policies, in accordance with rules pre-  
15          scribed by the Commission. Such compliance report  
16          shall accompany the financial reports of the nation-  
17          ally recognized statistical rating organization that  
18          are required to be filed with the Commission pursu-  
19          ant to this section and shall include a certification  
20          that, under penalty of law, the report is accurate  
21          and complete.”;

22          (8) in subsection (k)—

23                 (A) by striking “, on a confidential basis,”;

24                 (B) by striking “Each nationally” and in-  
25                 serting the following:

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each nationally”; and

2 (C) by adding at the end the following new  
3 paragraph:

4 “(2) EXCEPTION.—The Commission may treat  
5 as confidential any item filed with the Commission  
6 under paragraph (1), the publication of which the  
7 Commission determines may have a harmful effect  
8 on a nationally recognized statistical rating organi-  
9 zation.”;

10 (9) in subsection (l)(2)(A)(i), by striking “fur-  
11 nished” and inserting “filed”;

12 (10) by amending subsection (p) to read as fol-  
13 lows:

14 “(p) ESTABLISHMENT OF SEC OFFICE.—The Com-  
15 mission shall establish an office that administers the rules  
16 of the Commission with respect to the practices of nation-  
17 ally recognized statistical rating organizations in deter-  
18 mining ratings, in the public interest and for the protec-  
19 tion of investors, including rules designed to ensure that  
20 credit ratings issued by such registrants are accurate and  
21 not unduly influenced by conflicts of interest.”; and

22 (11) by adding after subsection (p) the fol-  
23 lowing new subsections:

24 “(q) TRANSPARENCY OF RATINGS PERFORMANCE.—

1           “(1) RULEMAKING REQUIRED.—The Commis-  
2           sion shall, by rule, require each nationally recognized  
3           statistical rating organization to publicly disclose in-  
4           formation on initial ratings and subsequent changes  
5           to such ratings for the purpose of providing a gauge  
6           of the performance of ratings and allowing investors  
7           to compare performance of ratings by different na-  
8           tionally recognized statistical rating organizations.

9           “(2) CONTENT.—The rules of the Commission  
10          under this subsection shall require, at a minimum,  
11          disclosures that—

12                 “(A) are comparable among nationally rec-  
13                 ognized statistical rating organizations, so that  
14                 investors can compare rating performance  
15                 across rating organizations;

16                 “(B) are clear and informative for a wide  
17                 range of investor sophistication;

18                 “(C) include performance information over  
19                 a range of years and for a variety of classes of  
20                 credit ratings, as determined by the Commis-  
21                 sion; and

22                 “(D) are published and made freely avail-  
23                 able by the nationally recognized statistical rat-  
24                 ing organization, on an easily accessible portion

1           of its website and in written form when re-  
2           quested by investors.

3           “(r) CREDIT RATINGS METHODOLOGIES.—

4           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall pre-  
5           scribe rules, in the public interest and for the pro-  
6           tection of investors, that require each nationally rec-  
7           ognized statistical rating organization to establish,  
8           maintain, and enforce written procedures and meth-  
9           odologies that are reasonably designed to—

10           “(A) ensure that credit ratings are deter-  
11           mined using procedures and methodologies, in-  
12           cluding quantitative models and qualitative in-  
13           puts that are determined in accordance with the  
14           policies and procedures of the nationally recog-  
15           nized statistical rating organization for devel-  
16           oping and modifying credit rating procedures  
17           and methodologies;

18           “(B) ensure that when major changes to  
19           credit rating procedures and methodologies, in-  
20           cluding to quantitative models and qualitative  
21           inputs, are made, that the changes are applied  
22           consistently to all credit ratings to which the  
23           changed procedures and methodologies apply  
24           and, to the extent the changes are made to  
25           credit rating surveillance procedures and meth-

1 odologies, they are applied to current credit rat-  
2 ings within a time period to be determined by  
3 the Commission by rule, and that the reason for  
4 the change is publicly disclosed;

5 “(C) notify persons who have access to the  
6 credit ratings of the nationally recognized sta-  
7 tistical rating organization, regardless of wheth-  
8 er they are made readily accessible for free or  
9 a reasonable fee, of the version of a procedure  
10 or methodology, including quantitative models  
11 and qualitative inputs, used with respect to a  
12 particular credit rating;

13 “(D) notify persons who have access to the  
14 credit ratings of the nationally recognized sta-  
15 tistical rating organization, regardless of wheth-  
16 er they are made readily accessible for free or  
17 a reasonable fee, when a change is made to a  
18 procedure or methodology, including to quan-  
19 titative models and qualitative inputs, or an  
20 error is identified in a procedure or method-  
21 ology that may result in credit rating actions,  
22 and the likelihood of the change resulting in  
23 current credit ratings being subject to rating  
24 actions; and

1           “(E) use credit rating symbols that distin-  
2           guish credit ratings for structured products  
3           from credit ratings for other products that the  
4           Commission determines appropriate or nec-  
5           essary in the public interest and for the protec-  
6           tion of investors.

7           “(2) RATING CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY.—

8           “(A) COMMISSION OBLIGATION.—Subject  
9           to subparagraphs (B) and (C), the Commission  
10          shall require, by rule, each nationally recognized  
11          statistical rating organization to establish,  
12          maintain, and enforce written policies and pro-  
13          cedures reasonably designed—

14                 “(i) with respect to credit ratings of  
15                 securities and money market instruments,  
16                 to assess the risk that investors in securi-  
17                 ties and money market instruments may  
18                 not receive payment in accordance with the  
19                 terms of such securities and instruments;

20                 “(ii) to define clearly any credit rating  
21                 symbol used by that organization; and

22                 “(iii) to apply such credit rating sym-  
23                 bol in a consistent manner for all types of  
24                 securities and money market instruments.

1                   “(B) ADDITIONAL CREDIT FACTORS.—

2                   Nothing in subparagraph (A)—

3                   “(i) prohibits a nationally recognized  
4                   statistical rating organization from using  
5                   additional credit factors that are docu-  
6                   mented and disclosed by the organization  
7                   and that have a demonstrated impact on  
8                   the risk an investor in a security or money  
9                   market instrument will not receive repay-  
10                  ment in accordance with the terms of  
11                  issuance;

12                  “(ii) prohibits a nationally recognized  
13                  statistical rating organization from consid-  
14                  ering credit factors that are unique to mu-  
15                  nicipal securities that are not backed by  
16                  the issuer’s full faith and credit in its as-  
17                  sessment of the risk an investor in a secu-  
18                  rity or money market instrument will not  
19                  receive repayment in accordance with the  
20                  terms of issuance; or

21                  “(iii) prohibits a nationally recognized  
22                  statistical rating organization from using  
23                  an additional symbol with respect to the  
24                  ratings described in subparagraph (A)(i)  
25                  for the purpose of distinguishing the rat-

1           ings of a certain type of security or money  
2           market instrument from ratings of any  
3           other types of securities or money market  
4           instruments.

5           “(C) COMPLEMENTARY RATINGS.—The  
6           Commission shall not impose any requirement  
7           under subparagraph (A) that prevents nation-  
8           ally recognized statistical rating organizations  
9           from establishing ratings that are complemen-  
10          tary to the ratings described in subparagraph  
11          (A)(i) and that are created to measure a dis-  
12          crete aspect of the security’s or instrument’s  
13          risk.

14          “(s) TRANSPARENCY OF CREDIT RATING METH-  
15          ODOLOGIES AND INFORMATION REVIEWED.—

16          “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall re-  
17          quire, by rule, a nationally recognized statistical rat-  
18          ing organization to include with the publication of  
19          each credit rating regardless of whether the credit  
20          rating is made readily accessible for free or a rea-  
21          sonable fee a form that discloses information about  
22          the assumptions underlying the procedures and  
23          methodologies used, and the data relied on, to deter-  
24          mine the credit rating in the format prescribed in

1 paragraph (2) and containing the information de-  
2 scribed in paragraph (3).

3 “(2) FORMAT.—The Commission shall prescribe  
4 a form for use under paragraph (1) that—

5 “(A) is designed in a user-friendly and  
6 helpful manner for investors to understand the  
7 information contained in the report;

8 “(B) requires the nationally recognized  
9 statistical rating organization to provide the  
10 content, as required by paragraph (3), in a  
11 manner that is directly comparable across secu-  
12 rities; and

13 “(C) the nationally recognized statistical  
14 rating organization certifies the information on  
15 the form as true and accurate.

16 “(3) CONTENT.—The Commission shall pre-  
17 scribe a form that requires a nationally recognized  
18 statistical rating organization to disclose —

19 “(A) the main assumptions included in  
20 constructing procedures and methodologies, in-  
21 cluding quantitative models and qualitative in-  
22 puts and assumptions about the correlation of  
23 defaults across obligors used in rating certain  
24 structured products;

1           “(B) the potential shortcomings of the  
2           credit ratings, and the types of risks not meas-  
3           ured in the credit ratings that the registrant is  
4           not commenting on, such as liquidity, market,  
5           and other risks;

6           “(C) information on the certainty of the  
7           rating, including information on the reliability,  
8           accuracy, and quality of the data relied on in  
9           determining the ultimate credit rating and a  
10          statement on the extent to which key data in-  
11          puts for the credit rating were reliable or lim-  
12          ited, including any limits on the reach of histor-  
13          ical data, limits in accessibility to certain docu-  
14          ments or other forms of information that would  
15          have better informed the credit rating, and the  
16          completeness of certain information considered;

17          “(D) whether and to what extent third  
18          party due diligence services have been utilized,  
19          and a description of the information that such  
20          third party reviewed in conducting due diligence  
21          services;

22          “(E) a description of relevant data about  
23          any obligor, issuer, security, or money market  
24          instrument that was used and relied on for the  
25          purpose of determining the credit rating;

1           “(F) a statement containing an overall as-  
2           sessment of the quality of information available  
3           and considered in producing a credit rating for  
4           a security in relation to the quality of informa-  
5           tion available to the nationally recognized sta-  
6           tistical rating organization in rating similar ob-  
7           ligors, securities, or money market instruments;

8           “(G) an explanation or measure of the po-  
9           tential volatility for the credit rating, including  
10          any factors that might lead to a change in the  
11          credit rating, and the extent of the change that  
12          might be anticipated under different conditions;

13          “(H) information on the content of the  
14          credit rating, including—

15                 “(i) the expected default probability;

16                 and

17                 “(ii) the loss given default;

18          “(I) information on the sensitivity of the  
19          rating to assumptions made by the nationally  
20          recognized statistical rating organization;

21          “(J) where applicable, how the nationally  
22          recognized statistical rating organization used  
23          servicer or remittance reports, and with what  
24          frequency, to conduct surveillance of the credit  
25          rating; and

1           “(K) such additional information as may  
2           be required by the Commission.

3           “(4) DUE DILIGENCE SERVICES.—

4           “(A) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—In any  
5           case in which third-party due diligence services  
6           are employed by a nationally recognized statis-  
7           tical rating organization or an issuer or under-  
8           writer in connection with the issuance of a cred-  
9           it rating, the firm providing the due diligence  
10          services shall provide to the nationally recog-  
11          nized statistical rating organization written cer-  
12          tification of such due diligence, which shall be  
13          subject to review by the Commission, and the  
14          issuer or underwriter shall provide any reports  
15          issued by the provider of such due diligence  
16          services to the nationally recognized statistical  
17          rating organization.

18          “(B) FORMAT AND CONTENT.—The Com-  
19          mission shall establish the appropriate format  
20          and content for written certifications required  
21          under subparagraph (A) to ensure that pro-  
22          viders of due diligence services have conducted  
23          a thorough review of data, documentation, and  
24          other relevant information necessary for the na-

1           tionally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
2           tion to provide an reliable rating.

3           “(C) DISCLOSURE OF CERTIFICATION.—

4           The Commission shall adopt rules requiring a  
5           nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
6           tion to disclose to persons who have access to  
7           the credit ratings of the nationally recognized  
8           statistical rating organization regardless of  
9           whether they are made readily accessible for  
10          free or a reasonable fee the certification de-  
11          scribed in subparagraph (A) with the publica-  
12          tion of the applicable credit rating in a manner  
13          that may permit the persons to determine the  
14          adequacy and level of due diligence services pro-  
15          vided by the third party.

16          “(t) PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.—

17          “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
18          graph (2), beginning 180 days from the date of en-  
19          actment of the Accountability, Reliability, and  
20          Transparency in Rating Agencies Act, it shall be un-  
21          lawful for a nationally recognized statistical rating  
22          organization, or an affiliate of a nationally recog-  
23          nized statistical rating organization, or any person  
24          associated with a nationally recognized statistical  
25          rating organization, to the extent determined appro-

1        appropriate by the Commission, that provides a rating for  
2        an issuer, underwriter, or placement agent of a secu-  
3        rity to provide to that issuer, underwriter, or place-  
4        ment agent, any non-rating service that preceded the  
5        retention of the nationally recognized statistical rat-  
6        ing organization by the issuer, underwriter, or place-  
7        ment agent to provide a rating for the security in  
8        question or any assistance provided after such point  
9        for which additional compensation is paid directly or  
10       indirectly, including—

11                “(B) risk management advisory services;

12                “(C) advice or consultation relating to any  
13                merger, sales, or disposition of assets of the  
14                issuer;

15                “(D) ancillary assistance, advice, or con-  
16                sulting services unrelated to any specific credit  
17                rating issuance; and

18                “(E) such further activities or services as  
19                the Commission may determine as necessary or  
20                appropriate in the public interest or for the pro-  
21                tection of investors.

22                “(2) EXEMPTION AUTHORITY.—The Commis-  
23                sion may, on a case by case basis, exempt any per-  
24                son, issuer, underwriter, placement agent, or nation-  
25                ally recognized statistical rating organization from

1 the prohibition in subsection (t), to the extent that  
2 such exemption is necessary or appropriate in the  
3 public interest and is consistent with the protection  
4 of investors, and subject to review by the Commis-  
5 sion.”.

6 **SEC. 4. STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE ACTIONS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 21D(b)(2) of the Securi-  
8 ties Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78u-4(b)(2)) is  
9 amended by inserting before the period at the end of the  
10 following: “, and in the case of an action brought under  
11 this title for money damages against a nationally recog-  
12 nized statistical rating organization, it shall be sufficient  
13 for purposes of pleading any required state of mind for  
14 purposes of such action that the complaint shall state with  
15 particularity facts giving rise to a strong inference that  
16 the nationally recognized statistical rating organization  
17 knowingly or recklessly violated the securities laws.”.

18 (b) PLEADING STANDARD.—Section 15E(m) of the  
19 Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78o-7(m))  
20 amended to read as follows:

21 “(m) APPLICATION OF ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS;  
22 PLEADING STANDARD IN PRIVATE RIGHTS OF ACTION.—  
23 Statements made by nationally recognized statistical rat-  
24 ing organizations shall not be deemed forward looking  
25 statements for purposes of section 21E. In any private

1 right of action commenced against a nationally recognized  
2 statistical rating organization under this title, the same  
3 pleading standards with respect to knowledge and reck-  
4 lessness shall apply to the nationally recognized statistical  
5 rating organization as would apply to any other person  
6 in the same or a similar private right of action against  
7 such person.”.

8 **SEC. 5. ISSUER DISCLOSURE OF PRELIMINARY RATINGS.**

9       The Securities and Exchange Commission shall adopt  
10 rules under authority of the Securities Act of 1933 (15  
11 U.S.C. 77a, et seq.) to require issuers to disclose prelimi-  
12 nary credit ratings received from nationally recognized  
13 statistical rating agencies on structured products and all  
14 forms of corporate debt.

15 **SEC. 6. TIMELINE FOR REGULATIONS.**

16       Unless otherwise specified in this Act, the Securities  
17 and Exchange Commission shall adopt rules and regula-  
18 tions, as required by the amendments made by this Act,  
19 not later than 365 days after the date of enactment.

20 **SEC. 7. FEDERAL AGENCY REVIEW OF RELIANCE ON RAT-**  
21 **INGS.**

22       (a) REVIEW.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
23 of the enactment of this Act, each Federal agency and de-  
24 partment shall, to the extent applicable, review—

1           (1) any regulation issued by such agency or de-  
2           partment that requires the use of an assessment of  
3           the creditworthiness of a security or money market  
4           instrument, and

5           (2) its policies and practices with regard to  
6           such ratings,

7           to determine if another measure of creditworthiness is ap-  
8           propriate in order to reduce the reliance of such agency  
9           on such ratings, to the extent permitted by law.

10          (b) REPORT.—Upon conclusion of the review required  
11          under subsection (a), each Federal agency and department  
12          shall submit a report to the Congress containing a descrip-  
13          tion of—

14               (1) any modification of any regulation such  
15               agency or department made following the review re-  
16               quired by subsection (a); and

17               (2) each regulation issued by such agency or  
18               department that requires the use of an assessment  
19               of the creditworthiness of a security or money mar-  
20               ket instrument that such agency or department did  
21               not modify pursuant to subsection (a), accompanied  
22               by an explanation of why such modification could  
23               not be made.

24          **SEC. 8. STUDIES AND REPORTS.**

25          (a) GAO STUDY.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General  
2 shall conduct a study of—

3           (A) the implementation of this Act and the  
4 amendments made by this Act by the Securities  
5 and Exchange Commission;

6           (B) the appropriateness of relying on rat-  
7 ings for use in Federal, State, and local securi-  
8 ties and banking regulations, including for de-  
9 termining capital requirements; and

10          (C) the effect of liability in private actions  
11 arising under the Securities Exchange Act of  
12 1934; and

13          (D) alternative means for compensating  
14 credit rating agencies that would create incen-  
15 tives for accurate credit ratings and what, if  
16 any, statutory changes would be required to  
17 permit or facilitate the use of such alternative  
18 means of compensation.

19          (2) REPORT.—Not later than 30 months after  
20 the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller  
21 General shall submit to Congress and the Securities  
22 Exchange Commission, a report containing the find-  
23 ings under the study required by subsection (a).

24          (b) SEC STUDY.—The Securities and Exchange  
25 Commission shall undertake a study on creating a system

1 whereby nationally recognized statistical rating organiza-  
2 tions are assigned on a rotating basis to issuers seeking  
3 a credit rating. Not later than 1 year after the date of  
4 enactment of this Act, the Securities and Exchange Com-  
5 mission shall transmit to Congress a report containing the  
6 findings of the study.