

Improvement of the Paperwork Reduction Act

Overview

On October 27, 2009, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Request for Comment in the Federal Register (74 Fed. Reg. 55269) asking for public input on how to improve implementation of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). The PRA requires federal agencies to minimize the public burden (cost) of collecting required information and to maximize the practical utility (benefit) of the collected information. The PRA regulations define burden to include certain activities, such as searching data sources and completing and reviewing the response, and federal agencies must estimate the time and resources needed to respond to a specific information collection requests (ICR). OMB is concerned that agency estimates can produce imprecise and inconsistent burden estimates, which is of particular concern for ICRs involving burdens of tens of millions of dollars. OMB is also concerned that the practical utility of the information collected is not adequately considered, and is requesting public input on methods for ensuring information is collected in a manner that ensures the practical utility of the collection.

Update

On December 28, 2009, CPDA submitted comments noting its strong support for the PRA goal of minimizing the burden of federal information collections, especially on small entities, and the requirement to demonstrate that information has a practical utility. The comments point out that even though OMB regulations consider a burden to include the costs of “collecting, validating, and verifying information,” and that EPA guidance considers the actual costs of generating and collecting the information a part of the burden, OMB has not historically required EPA’s Office of Pesticide Programs to include those costs in burden estimates. CPDA used the recent ICR for the Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program (EDSP) to demonstrate how EPA significantly underestimated the burden of generating and submitting test data by excluding those costs from the burden estimate, and that EPA did not demonstrate the practical utility of the information it seeks to collect. Finally, CPDA offered specific suggestions on how OMB can improve implementation of the PRA, easing the paperwork burden on small entities, and increasing the practical utility of large ICRs.