AI Update: Senators Introduce AI in Government Bill

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On September 26, a bipartisan group of senators introduced the Artificial Intelligence in Government Act, legislation that would direct certain executive agencies to specifically research and consider AI applications and strategy, as well as create an advisory board to address AI policy and issues. The bill's sponsors cited both the promises and risks of AI as significant motivations for the proposed legislation.

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Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Rob Portman (R-OH), and Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the initial draft of the bill. Each pointed to AI's great potential across numerous facets of society, as well as the importance of proactively addressing AI's place in government. As Senator Portman summed up, "[a]rtificial intelligence will have significant impacts for our country, economy, and society. Ensuring that our government has the capabilities and expertise to help navigate those impacts will be important in the coming years and decades. . . . [T]his bipartisan legislation [ensures that] our government understands the benefits and pitfalls of this technology as it engages in a responsible, accountable rollout of AI."

The Act has four chief functions:

- First, it expands a General Services Administration office to provide "technical expertise to relevant government agencies," research federal AI policy, and "promote U.S. competitiveness through agency and industry cooperation." Senator Schatz identified the importance of having "the global competitive edge in AI," which requires the government to "mak[e] the most of these technologies." To that end, the Act "will give the federal government the resources it needs to hire experts, do research, and work across federal agencies to use AI technologies in smart and effective ways."

- Second, the Act establishes an advisory board to "address AI policy opportunities and challenges for executive agencies."

- Third, it directs to Office of Management and Budget to establish strategies for using AI in "federal data strategy."

- Fourth, the Act directs the Office of Personnel Management to "identify skills and competencies for AI" and establish or update an occupational series.

The sponsors spoke of the importance of cooperation across various sectors in researching AI and integrating it into government and society. Senator Gardner stated that the bill "will bring agencies, industry, and others to the table to discuss government adoption of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies." And Senator Harris said that the Act will allow the government "to build its expertise and in partnership with industry and academia . . . . to ensure that society reaps the benefits of these emerging technologies, while protecting people from potential risks, such as biases in AI."

These hopes for cooperation have been echoed by a number of stakeholders and industry groups. Organizations endorsing the Act include the Business Software Alliance, the Center for Democracy and Technology, the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, the Internet Association, the Lincoln Network, the Niskanen Center, and R Street Institute. Intel and Microsoft have also endorsed the bill.

The bill, which recognizes AI's simultaneous promises and challenges for future policymakers and enjoys broad-

based support, is still in the very early stages of the legislative process. But it represents a notable step towards government adoption of AI.

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