Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act of 2020

As artificial intelligence (AI) has become pervasive in society, both the Executive Branch and Congress have begun taking steps toward adoption of AI in government operations. Enacted as part of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (P.L. 116-283), Congress outlined a plan for a National AI Initiative, encouraging cross-agency collaboration in pursuing a more concrete AI strategy.

Division E, "The National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act of 2020" (NAIIA) provides statutory guidance for next steps, requires reports for accountability, and highlights the need for open data and best data sharing practices to be incorporated into the AI strategy.

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Here are the highlights:

- Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) will establish a National AI Initiative Office (NAIO) that will serve as point of contact, provide technical and administrative support, and engage in outreach and promotion of the Initiative.

- Co-chaired by Director of OSTP and a rotating member from National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Commerce, or the Department of Energy, there will be an Interagency Committee that is tasked with providing coordination of all AI activity among agencies and developing strategic plan creating goals, priorities, and metrics for evaluation of agency AI plans.

- Appointed by the Director of Commerce, NAIIA requires the creation of an Advisory Committee (NAIAC) that will consist of experts from academia, private sector, nonprofits, and federal laboratories. Their scope is larger than the Interagency Committee and will include assessing U.S. competitiveness in AI, issues related to U.S. workforce and AI, NAII's strategic plan, budget, activities, partnerships and any potential changes necessary, and general AI oversight.

- A 12-person, interdisciplinary National AI Research Resource Task Force (NAIRRTF) will be established to examine the feasibility of establishing and sustaining a national AI research resource. Additionally, they will publish a roadmap detailing how to create and sustain a research resource, such as including goals and metrics for success, necessary infrastructure, and a governance model.

Other provisions of the NAII include conducting a current and future impact assessment of AI on the workforce across all sectors in the US; directing NSF to award financial assistance for the planning, establishment, and support of a network of AI-focused research institutes; and specific direction to the Department of Commerce, the NSF, and the Department of Energy to develop technical standards, guidelines, and best practices for trustworthy AI.

What this means for AI in government

AI technology has the potential to completely change government services –– from taking over mundane paperwork tasks and freeing up human resources for more complex work to more precise predictions for natural disasters. Leveraging the government's data assets for AI will allow for more efficient, effective delivery of public services.

With a designated NAII Office, there will be a clear leader in the federal effort to incorporate AI across agencies. While there will be significant challenges to face throughout implementation of the Initiative, including insights from private and public experts allows an AI roadmap to incorporate anticipated barriers and rely on a set of best practices.

The clear commitment to continued research of AI capabilities and infrastructure as well as education and existing workforce training will allow the government to adapt as technologies emerge and change. Data Coalition supports a strategy for AI governance and research that encourages ethical deployment of innovative technologies that improves decision making and improves government efficiency.

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How Division E is being implemented

A number of steps have been taken to implement the NAII.

- NAII launched **AI.gov** to serve as the hub for all things national AI strategy, providing updates from the Director, information from the committees, and regular publications

- The NAII Office was established and is led by Founding Director Dr. Lynne Parker

- The **AI Research Resource Task Force** has been fully formed and has met 3 times. To inform their report findings, the Task Force put out a Request for Information about implementation of the research resource and received 84 comments

- As of November 2021, the **AI Advisory Board** is in the process of being established

- In September 2021, the Department of Commerce **established** an AI Advisory Committee

- Since 2020, NSF has **established** 18 new AI research institutes, expanding a network of institutes across 40 states and D.C.