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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to expand and modernize the weather radio system of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BABIN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To amend the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to expand and modernize the weather radio system of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 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 Act may be cited as the “NOAA Weather Radio
5 Modernization Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. NOAA WEATHER RADIO.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Weather Research and Fore-
3 casting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8501 et seq.)
4 is amended by adding at the end the following new title:

5 **“TITLE VII—NOAA WEATHER**
6 **RADIO**

7 **“SEC. 701. NOAA WEATHER RADIO.**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall es-
9 tablish or maintain a nationwide weather radio network,
10 to be known as ‘NOAA Weather Radio’, that—

11 “(1) broadcasts weather information, including
12 emergency weather watches, warnings, geological
13 hazards, and other hazard information;

14 “(2) operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
15 and

16 “(3) is resilient to emergency hazards, such as
17 loss of power and cellular service.

18 “(b) COVERAGE AND RELIABILITY.—The Under Sec-
19 retary shall ensure the reliability of NOAA Weather Radio
20 by—

21 “(1) maintaining support for existing systems
22 before new technologies are implemented, especially
23 such systems that serve areas not covered by or hav-
24 ing poor quality cellular service; and

1 “(2) ensuring consistent maintenance and oper-
2 ations monitoring, with timely repairs to broadcast
3 transmitter site equipment and antennas.

4 “(c) MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE.—

5 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To the maximum extent
6 practicable, the Under Secretary shall expand the
7 coverage of and modernize NOAA Weather Radio to
8 ensure it remains valuable to the public, including
9 by—

10 “(A) improving those methods of commu-
11 nicating the risks posed by hazardous weather
12 events to the public that are most likely to re-
13 sult in informed decision-making regarding the
14 mitigation of such risks;

15 “(B) improving communication of haz-
16 ardous weather warnings and the urgency of
17 such warnings, including to areas that experi-
18 ence a high frequency of such warnings;

19 “(C) enhancing the ability to amplify non-
20 weather emergency messages for the integrated
21 public alert and warning system (IPAWS)
22 under section 1756 of the Homeland Security
23 Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 321o–1) through NOAA
24 Weather Radio, as necessary;

1 “(D) acquiring additional transmitters, as
2 determined appropriate, to expand coverage
3 to—

4 “(i) areas at high risk for rapid onset
5 weather disasters that require short-fuse
6 warnings;

7 “(ii) communities without—

8 “(I) broadband internet access
9 service (as such term is defined in
10 section 8.1(b) of title 47, Code of
11 Federal Regulations (or a successor
12 regulation)), and as depicted by a
13 map created pursuant to section
14 802(c)(1)(C) of the Communications
15 Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 642(c)(1)(C));

16 “(II) State or local emergency
17 warning systems; or

18 “(III) satellite coverage; and

19 “(iii) Federal lands, such as land in
20 the National Park System or the National
21 Forest System and National Recreation
22 Areas;

23 “(E) adding the capability to disseminate
24 NOAA Weather Radio alerts—

25 “(i) by satellite; or

1 “(ii) through—

2 “(I) common internet protocols,
3 such as the Cloud; or

4 “(II) other emerging technologies
5 that satisfy the intent of this section.

6 “(F) conducting research and development
7 to modernize geographically specific warnings.

8 “(2) ELEMENTS.—In carrying out paragraph
9 (1), the Under Secretary shall—

10 “(A) upgrade telecommunications infra-
11 structure of NOAA Weather Radio to accelerate
12 the transition of broadcasts to internet protocol-
13 based communications over non-copper media;

14 “(B) accelerate software upgrades to the
15 Advanced Weather Interactive Processing Sys-
16 tem, or any relevant system successors, in order
17 to implement partial county notifications and
18 alerts;

19 “(C) enhance accessibility and usability of
20 data and feeds of NOAA Weather Radio with
21 feedback from relevant stakeholders, including
22 the private sector;

23 “(D) develop options, including satellite
24 backup capability and commercial provider
25 partnerships, for continuity of service of NOAA

1 Weather Radio in the event of an outage at a
2 weather forecast office;

3 “(E) research and develop alternative op-
4 tions, including microwave capabilities, to trans-
5 mit NOAA Weather Radio signals to transmit-
6 ters that are remote or do not have internet
7 protocol capability;

8 “(F) transition critical applications to the
9 Integrated Dissemination Program, or any rel-
10 evant program successors; and

11 “(G) work with the General Services Ad-
12 ministration, and other relevant agencies, to de-
13 velop new, alternative, or updated expedited
14 mechanisms to secure priority space capacity,
15 such as leased land and tower space, for NOAA
16 Weather Radio critical infrastructure, including
17 transmitters and antennas, that are best suited
18 for the national security and public safety mis-
19 sions of NOAA Weather Radio.

20 “(3) PRIORITY.—In carrying out paragraph (1),
21 the Under Secretary shall prioritize practices, capa-
22 bilities, and technologies recommended in accordance
23 with the assessment under subsection (d) to maxi-
24 mize the accessibility of NOAA Weather Radio, par-

1 ticularly in areas of the United States described in
2 subparagraph (D)(i) of such paragraph.

3 “(d) ASSESSMENT FOR MANAGEMENT AND DIS-
4 TRIBUTION.—

5 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
6 after the date of the enactment of this section, the
7 Under Secretary shall complete an assessment of ac-
8 cess to NOAA Weather Radio.

9 “(2) ELEMENTS.—In conducting the assess-
10 ment required under paragraph (1), the Under Sec-
11 retary shall take into consideration and provide to
12 the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of
13 the House of Representatives and the Committee on
14 Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Sen-
15 ate recommendations regarding the following:

16 “(A) Input from relevant stakeholders
17 within the weather enterprise, including third-
18 party platforms that provide online services,
19 such as websites and mobile device applications.

20 “(B) The manner by which existing or new
21 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administra-
22 tion management systems may promote con-
23 sistent, efficient, and compatible access to
24 NOAA Weather Radio.

1 “(C) The ability of the National Oceanic
2 and Atmospheric Administration to aggregate
3 real-time broadcast feeds at one or more central
4 locations, as a redundancy to the broadcast feed
5 from the nearest weather forecast office.

6 “(D) Effective coordination between agen-
7 cies with responsibilities relating to emergencies
8 and natural disasters.

9 “(E) The potential effects of an electro-
10 magnetic pulse or geomagnetic disturbance on
11 NOAA Weather Radio.

12 “(e) DEFINITION.—In this section:

13 “(1) GEOLOGICAL HAZARD.—The term ‘geologi-
14 cal hazard’ means a tsunami, forest fire, mudflow,
15 volcanic eruption, volcanic ash, landslide, geo-
16 magnetic storm, or other similar such hazard.

17 “(2) SHORT-FUSE WARNING.—The term ‘short-
18 fuse warning’ means a warning relating to a tor-
19 nado, severe thunderstorm, or flash flood.

20 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
21 are authorized to be appropriated to the Under Sec-
22 retary—

23 “(1) for each of fiscal years 2026 through
24 2031, \$20,000,000 to operate NOAA Weather Radio
25 under subsections (a) and (b); and

1 “(2) for fiscal year 2026, \$100,000,000, which
2 shall remain available until expended, to carry out
3 subsections (c) and (d).”.

4 (b) WEATHER READY ALL HAZARDS AWARD PRO-
5 GRAM.—Section 407 of the Weather Research and Fore-
6 casting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8546) is—

7 (1) transferred to title VII of such Act, as
8 added by subsection (a);

9 (2) inserted after section 701 of such Act, as
10 added by subsection (a); and

11 (3) redesignated as section 702.

12 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of contents
13 for the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act
14 of 2017 is amended—

15 (1) by striking the item relating to section 407;

16 and

17 (2) by adding at the end the following new
18 items:

“TITLE VII—NOAA WEATHER RADIO

“Sec. 701. NOAA Weather Radio.

“Sec. 702. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Ready
All Hazards Award Program.”.

19 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR WEATHER WARNING**
20 **SYSTEMS IN FLASH FLOOD ZONES.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary of Com-
22 merce for Standards and Technology, in consultation with
23 the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmos-

1 there, may support the development of standards for flash
2 flood emergency alert systems with respect to a 100-year
3 floodplain (as such term is defined in section 100202(a)
4 of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of
5 2012 (42 U.S.C. 4004(a))).

6 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—If the Under Secretary of
7 Commerce for Standards and Technology supports the de-
8 velopment of standards under subsection (a), the Under
9 Secretary shall ensure that such standards—

10 (1) meet the needs of communities without—

11 (A) broadband internet access service (as
12 such term is defined in section 8.1(b) of title
13 47, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor
14 regulation)) and as depicted by a map created
15 pursuant to section 802(c)(1)(C) of the Com-
16 munications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.
17 642(c)(1)(C));

18 (B) State or local emergency warning sys-
19 tems; or

20 (C) satellite coverage; and

21 (2) will result in reliable flash flood emergency
22 alert systems with respect to a 100-year floodplain
23 referred to in subsection (a), especially during haz-
24 ardous events.

1 (c) REPORT REQUIRED.—If the Under Secretary of
2 Commerce for Standards and Technology supports the de-
3 velopment of standards under subsection (a), the Under
4 Secretary shall, not later than two years after the date
5 of the enactment of this Act, submit to the Committee
6 on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Rep-
7 resentatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science,
8 and Transportation of the Senate a report that includes
9 a summary of such standards.

10 **SEC. 4. CLASSIFICATION OF AND STAFFING PLAN FOR EM-**
11 **PLOYEES.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title IV of the Weather Research
13 and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8541
14 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 406 the fol-
15 lowing new section:

16 **“SEC. 407. CLASSIFICATION OF AND STAFFING PLAN FOR**
17 **EMPLOYEES.**

18 “(a) CLASSIFICATION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYEES.—

19 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days
20 after the date of the enactment of this section, the
21 Under Secretary shall coordinate with the Director
22 of the Office of Management and Budget to cat-
23 gorize each position in the National Oceanographic
24 and Atmospheric Administration specified in para-

1 graph (2) as a protective service occupation under
2 the Standard Occupational Classification System.

3 “(2) POSITIONS SPECIFIED.—The positions
4 specified in this paragraph are the following occupa-
5 tional positions in the National Oceanic and Atmos-
6 pheric Administration, as defined by the Director of
7 the Office of Personnel Management:

8 “(A) Meteorology Series (1340).

9 “(B) Hydrology Series (1315).

10 “(C) General Physical Science Series
11 (1301).

12 “(D) Electronics Technical Series (0856).

13 “(E) Information Technology Management
14 Series (GS–2210).

15 “(3) REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO STAFFING
16 CHANGES.—The Under Secretary may not carry out
17 any staffing change in any of the occupational posi-
18 tions specified in paragraph (2) unless—

19 “(A) a period of 30 days has passed after
20 the receipt by the Committee on Science, Space,
21 and Technology of the House of Representa-
22 tives and the Committee on Commerce, Science,
23 and Transportation of the Senate of a report by
24 the Under Secretary containing a description of
25 the staffing change proposed to be taken and

1 the facts and circumstances relied upon in sup-
2 port of such staffing change; or

3 “(B) each such committee before the expi-
4 ration of such period has transmitted to the
5 Under Secretary written notice to the effect
6 that such committee has no objection to such
7 proposed staffing change.

8 “(b) FIVE-YEAR STAFFING PLAN FOR THE NA-
9 TIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION.—
10 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment
11 of this section, the Under Secretary shall submit to Con-
12 gress a five-year staffing plan for—

13 “(1) the National Weather Service; and

14 “(2) any positions within the National Oceanic
15 and Atmospheric Administration that support fore-
16 casts and warnings to protect human life and prop-
17 erty, including positions that involve—

18 “(A) collection of data for incorporation
19 into watches and warnings;

20 “(B) operation and maintenance of equip-
21 ment for collection of data described in sub-
22 paragraph (A);

23 “(C) maintenance of information tech-
24 nology systems;

1 “(D) modeling for forecasts and warnings;

2 and

3 “(E) research to improve forecasts, warn-

4 ings, and communication of such warnings to

5 better protect human life and property.”.

6 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents

7 for the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act

8 of 2017 is amended by inserting after the item relating

9 to section 406 the following new item:

“Sec. 407. Classification of and staffing plan for employee.”.

10 **SEC. 5. STAFFING FOR POSITIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY AT**

11 **THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.**

12 (a) ASSESSMENT.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days

14 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Di-

15 rector of the National Weather Service shall submit

16 to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and

17 Atmosphere, the Committee on Science, Space, and

18 Technology of the House of Representatives, and the

19 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-

20 tation of the Senate an assessment of the critical

21 staffing needs of the National Weather Service, in-

22 cluding the needs of every Weather Forecast Office

23 and every Center Weather Service Unit.

24 (2) ELEMENTS.—The assessment under para-

25 graph (1) shall include the following elements:

1 (A) The number and corresponding occu-
2 pational series of employees needed to fully
3 staff each Weather Forecast Office and Center
4 Weather Service Unit of the National Weather
5 Service that maximize efficiency while consid-
6 ering the following:

7 (i) Safety.

8 (ii) Morale.

9 (iii) Changing seasonal needs.

10 (iv) Forecasting complexity of the geo-
11 graphical area at issue.

12 (B) Historical staffing needs versus histor-
13 ical vacancies for each such Weather Forecast
14 Office and Center Weather Service Unit.

15 (b) DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the National
17 Weather Service may appoint, without regard to sec-
18 tions 3308 through 3319, 3327, and 3330 of title 5,
19 United States Code, qualified candidates to any of
20 the following positions to satisfy critical staffing
21 needs and fill vacancies determined in accordance
22 with the assessment under subsection (a):

23 (A) Employees performing public safety
24 mission functions, including the following:

1 (i) Meteorologists (classification series
2 1340).

3 (ii) Hydrologists (classification series
4 1315).

5 (iii) General physical scientists (classi-
6 fication series 1301).

7 (iv) Computer specialists (classifica-
8 tion series 2210).

9 (v) Electronic technicians (classifica-
10 tion series 0856).

11 (B) Other positions for which primary re-
12 sponsibilities include equipment operations,
13 maintenance, analysis, information technology,
14 or engineering.

15 (2) SUNSET.—The authority under paragraph
16 (1) shall expire on the date on which all positions to
17 satisfy critical staffing needs and vacancies under
18 such paragraph have been filled.