

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5324

To provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma (for herself and Ms. SHERRILL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

A BILL

To provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, 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 of 2021” or the “NWR Modernization
6 Act of 2021”.

7 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

1 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
2 trator” means the Administrator of the National
3 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

4 (2) NOAA WEATHER RADIO.—The term
5 “NOAA Weather Radio” means the National Oce-
6 anic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio
7 All Hazards network.

8 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

9 Congress finds the following:

10 (1) The NOAA Weather Radio is a nationwide
11 network of transmitters that are critical to pro-
12 tecting life and property by broadcasting weather
13 and other hazard alerts.

14 (2) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts currently
15 reach 95 percent of the United States population.

16 (3) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts originate
17 from all National Weather Service Offices, but are
18 only available via a receiver located in sufficient
19 proximity to a radio transmitting tower.

20 (4) There are limited options to obtain NOAA
21 Weather Radio broadcasts via the Internet or mobile
22 device application, which are provided by volunteer
23 mechanisms obtaining the audio feed in an ad hoc
24 manner.

1 (5) NOAA Weather Radio should provide equal
2 access and availability to unimpeded broadcasts of
3 weather and non-weather hazards to every person lo-
4 cated within the United States, its territories, and
5 tribal lands.

6 **SEC. 4. UPGRADING EXISTING SYSTEMS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall, to the
8 maximum extent practicable, expand coverage of the
9 NOAA Weather Radio and ensure its reliability. In doing
10 so, the Administrator shall—

11 (1) maintain support for existing systems serv-
12 ing areas not covered by cellular service or having
13 poor quality cellular service;

14 (2) ensure consistent maintenance of, and time-
15 ly repairs to, broadcast towers and antennas; and

16 (3) enhance the ability to amplify Non-Weather
17 Emergency Messages via NOAA Weather Radio as
18 necessary.

19 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
20 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
21 \$20,000,000, to remain available until expended.

22 **SEC. 5. MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—In parallel to the activities under
24 section 4, the Administrator shall, to the maximum extent
25 practicable, provide upgrades to the NOAA Weather Radio

1 to ensure its capabilities and coverage remain valuable to
2 the public. In carrying out these activities, the Adminis-
3 trator shall—

4 (1) provide upgrades to the telecommunications
5 infrastructure to accelerate the transition of broad-
6 casts to Internet Protocol-based communications
7 over non-copper media;

8 (2) accelerate software upgrades to the Ad-
9 vanced Weather Interactive Processing System in
10 order to implement partial county notifications and
11 alerts;

12 (3) consult with private sector entities to ensure
13 that NOAA Weather Radio data and feeds are easily
14 accessible in a format and manner most beneficial
15 for use by third-party products;

16 (4) develop options, including satellite backup
17 capability, for NOAA Weather Radio continuity in
18 the event of Weather Forecast Office outages;

19 (5) research and develop alternative options, in-
20 cluding microwave capabilities, to transmit NOAA
21 Weather Radio signals to transmitters that are re-
22 mote or that do not have Internet Protocol capa-
23 bility; and

24 (6) transition critical applications to the Inte-
25 grated Dissemination Program.

1 (b) PRIORITY.—In carrying out the objectives de-
2 scribed in subsection (a), the Administrator shall prioritize
3 practices, capabilities, and technologies most capable of
4 making real-time warning information and broadcasts
5 available online.

6 (c) ASSESSMENT FOR MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enact-
7 tion.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enact-
8 ment of this Act, the Administrator shall complete an as-
9 sessment of access to NOAA Weather Radio. In con-
10 ducting such an assessment, the Administrator shall take
11 into consideration and provide recommendations on—

12 (1) the need for continuous, adequate, and
13 operational real-time broadcasts of the NOAA
14 Weather Radio in both urban and rural areas;

15 (2) the availability of online services, such as
16 websites and mobile device applications, that require
17 NOAA Weather Radio access;

18 (3) existing or new management systems, which
19 promote consistent, efficient, and compatible access
20 to NOAA Weather Radio;

21 (4) the ability of the National Oceanic and At-
22 mospheric Administration to aggregate real time
23 broadcast feeds at one or more central locations;

24 (5) effective interagency coordination; and

1 (6) any other function the Administrator deems
2 necessary.

3 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
4 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 \$40,000,000, to remain available until expended.

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