

NOAA WEATHER RADIO MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2023

MAY 16, 2023.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. LUCAS, from the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1482]

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1482) 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, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

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PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

H.R. 1482 expands the coverage and increases reliability of the NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) by upgrading technologies and in-

creasing the number of transmitters leading to modernization of the NOAA Weather Radio for the 21st Century.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, water, and emergency forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services for the protection of life and property. Forecasters at Weather Forecasts Offices utilize the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System to create and distribute NWS weather warnings. When NWS disseminates warnings, they are sent out among several outlets and services—the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and NWR being two of the most effective and efficient methods.

Wireless Emergency Alerts are originated via the National Weather Service Telecommunication Gateway and then sent to the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS). Once the alert reaches the IPAWS, the alerts are then “pushed out” to commercial wireless carriers who broadcast the alert from cell towers in the threat area, straight to individuals’ cellular devices. However, there is not complete commercial coverage from cellular towers and not every individual possesses a cellular device.

NWR provides coverage for the majority of the nation including the portions not covered by WEA. NWR consists of a nationwide network of over 1000 radio stations covering all 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. Pacific Territories. NWR provides NWS official warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week making it the comprehensive source for weather and emergency information to over 95% of the population. NWR provides services where cellular coverage is limited, when cellular broadcast towers are out of commission, and when internet is unavailable. However, due to NWR transmitter sustainability there is a need for improving and modernizing NWR.

Operations and maintenance as well as tower transmitter leases are increasingly expensive as transmitters age. Furthermore, as populations shift it becomes difficult to ensure sufficient transmitters in the correct locations in addition to shifting consistent maintenance and timely repairs to those transmitters. There is also the need to transition from obsolete copper technology to Internet Protocol (IP)—or wireless based technologies. Transitioning to a modernized NWR will allow for greater precision with warnings and alerts. Implementing partial county alerting rather than broad warnings will reduce over-warning of areas which can lead to warned individuals becoming complacent. Finally, modernizing NWR will provide the ability to enhance non-weather emergency messages via NWR at the request of authorized officials.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

In the 117th Congress, Representative Stephanie Bice, then-Ranking Member, and Representative Mikie Sherrill, then-Chairwoman, of the Environment Subcommittee of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee introduced H.R. 5324, the NWR Modernization Act of 2021 on September 22, 2021. It passed by a vote of 397 yeas to 20 nays on the House floor on May 11, 2022.

H.R. 1482 was introduced on March 9, 2023, by Representative Bice (R–OK) with Representatives Sherrill (D–NJ), Miller (R–OH), Bonamici (D–OR), Kilmer (D–WA), Jackson (D–NC), and Lee (D–PA).

COMMITTEE VIEWS

The Committee notes the critical importance of NWR to the protection of life and property of individuals in the United States and its Territories during extreme weather events. NWR has provided continuous warnings, watches, forecasts, and additional hazard information for decades and is an essential resource for the public, especially Americans who are often unable to access advanced products via internet communication or cellular devices. Modernization efforts authorized in this bill will help bring NWR into the 21st century and support continued, reliable broadcasts of weather and non-weather hazards to Americans across the United States and its territories.

SECTION-BY-SECTION

Section 1. Short title

The short title of this legislation is “NWR Modernization Act of 2023.”

Section 2. Definitions

This section defines Administrator and NOAA Weather Radio.

Section 3. Findings

This section makes five findings on the importance of the NWR and efforts to modernize it’s broadcast to reach the entire population of the United States.

Section 4. Upgrading existing systems

This section directs the NOAA Administrator to expand coverage of the existing NWR and ensure its reliability through system support, maintenance, and acquisition of additional transmitters to reach rural and underserved communities.

Section 5. Modernization initiative

This section directs the NOAA Administrator to undertake activities in parallel to those in Section 4 to modernized NWR capabilities and ensure coverage remains valuable to the public, including upgrading the telecommunications infrastructure, accelerating software upgrades, ensuring accessibility of the data to stakeholders, developing backup capabilities, and more. Additionally, the Administrator is required to conduct an assessment that would provide recommendations on improving access to NWR, with input from relevant stakeholders, and those recommendations prioritized in carrying out activities to maximize accessibility.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On March 29, 2023, the Committee met in open session and ordered reported favorably the bill, H.R. 1482, without amendment, by roll call vote, a quorum being present.

ROLL CALL VOTES

Clause 3(b) of rule XIII requires the Committee to list the record votes on the motion to report legislation and amendments thereto. The following reflects the record votes taken during the Committee consideration:

Full Committee Markup
 Bill: HR 1482, motion
 to report

Sponsor: Bice, Sherrill

Majority	Aye	No	Present
Frank Lucas, Oklahoma	1		
Bill Posey, Florida	1		
Randy Weber, Texas	1		
Brian Babin, Texas	1		
Jim Baird, Indiana	1		
Daniel Webster, Florida	1		
Mike Garcia, California	1		
Stephanie Bice, Oklahoma	1		
Jay Obernolte, California	1		
Chuck Fleischmann, Tennessee			
Darrell Issa, California	1		
Rick Crawford, Arkansas	1		
Claudia Tenney, New York	1		
Ryan Zinke, Montana	1		
Scott Franklin, Florida	1		
Dale Strong, Alabama	1		
Max Miller, Ohio	1		
Rich McCormick, Georgia	1		
Mike Collins, Georgia	1		
Brandon Williams, New York	1		
Tom Kean, New Jersey	1		
Minority	Aye	No	Present
Zoe Lofgren, California	1		
Suzanne Bonamici, Oregon	1		
Haley Stevens, Michigan	1		
Jamaal Bowman, New York	1		
Deborah Ross, New Carolina	1		
Eric Sorensen, Illinois	1		
Andrea Salinas, Oregon	1		
Val Foushee, North Carolina	1		
Kevin Mullin, California	1		
Jeff Jackson, North Carolina	1		
Emilia Sykes, Ohio	1		
Maxwell Frost, Florida	1		
Yadira Caraveo, Colorado	1		
Summer Lee, Pennsylvania	1		
Jennifer McClellan, Virginia	1		
Ted Lieu, California			
Sean Casten, Illinois	1		
Paul Tonko			
Total	36	0	

Date: 3/29/23

Measure: _____

Offered By: _____

Amendment No.: _____

Result?	Agreed To: [X]		
	Not Agreed To: []		
	Withdrawn: []		
Voice Vote	Ayes	Nays	Present
	36	0	

APPLICATION OF LAW TO THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that H.R. 1482 does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act (Public Law 104–1).

STATEMENT OF OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

In compliance with clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII and clause (2)(b)(1) of rule X, the Committee's oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the descriptive portions of this report.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Pursuant to clause (3)(c)(4) of rule XIII, the goal of H.R. 1482 is to modernize NOAA Weather Radio by increasing the number of transmitters and upgrading related technologies in order to expand coverage and increase system reliability. Modernization of the NOAA Weather Radio system is integral to ensure continued, reliable broadcasts of weather and non-weather hazards to Americans across the United States and its territories.

DUPLICATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(5) of rule XIII, the Committee finds that no provision of H.R. 1482 establishes or reauthorizes a program of the Federal Government known to be duplicative of another Federal program, including any program that was included in a report to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.

FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT

The Committee finds that the legislation does not establish or authorize the establishment of an advisory committee within the definition of section 5(b) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

UNFUNDED MANDATE STATEMENT

The Committee adopts as its own the estimate of Federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

EARMARK IDENTIFICATION

Pursuant to clauses 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI, the Committee finds that H.R. 1482 does not include any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII, the Committee adopts as its own the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. At the time this report was filed, the estimate was not available.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY, AND TAX
EXPENDITURES

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII, the Committee finds that H.R. 1482 would result in no new or increased budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII, at the time this report was filed, the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 was not available.

