

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT ACT

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. 1496]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, to whom was
referred the bill (H.R. 1496) to upgrade the communications service
used by the National Weather Service, and for other purposes, hav-
ing considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amend-
ment and recommends that the bill do pass.

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PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

H.R. 1496 authorizes the National Weather Service (NWS) to improve its current legacy instant messaging communications system (referred to as 'NWSSchat') by upgrading to a cloud-based commercial communications system.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The National Weather Service provides weather, water, and climate data, forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services for the protection of life and property, and enhancement of the national economy. To communicate its services with local officials and emergency responders, NWS personnel use NWSSchat, an instant messaging program utilized to share critical warning decision expertise and weather information. The current legacy communication system has experienced dissemination issues, and the NWS has initiated a demonstration effort to migrate NWSSchat to a new operational environment. The National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act would support NWS' ongoing efforts to improve the reliability of their instant messaging service by requiring the implementation of a commercial off-the-shelf solution.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

In the 117th Congress, Representative Randy Feenstra introduced H.R. 7361, the National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act on April 1, 2022. It passed as part of a package of suspension bills that received requests for recorded votes (H. Res. 1254) on the House floor on July 27, 2022.

H.R. 1496 was introduced on March 9, 2023, by Representative Feenstra (R-IA) with Representatives Ross (D-NC), Miller (R-OH), Bonamici (D-OR), Crawford (R-AR), Carbajal (D-CA), Miller-Meeks (R-IA), Jackson (D-NC), Hinson (R-IA), Sorensen (D-IL), Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR), Foushee (D-NC), LaMalfa (R-CA), Radewagen (R-AS), Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Carey (R-OH), and Lee (D-PA).

COMMITTEE VIEWS

The Committee notes that NWSSchat is a critical tool but has faced issues with dissemination of information with its current legacy system. To address these issues, the NWS has already started to transition to the use of commercial off-the-shelf communication systems. This bill would provide the NWS with the necessary authorization to continue its transition from its current legacy system to a new system and increase the overall performance and reliability of an instant messaging system.

SECTION-BY-SECTION

Section 1. Short title

The short title of this legislation is "National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act."

Section 2. National Weather Service communications

This section amends Title IV of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 by directing the National Weather Service to upgrade its current legacy instant message service, commonly known as NWSSchat, to a cloud-based commercial off-the-shelf communications system. This section also authorizes \$3,000,000 for each of FY2024 through FY2027 from amounts appropriated to NWS to carry out this Act.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On March 29, 2023, the Committee met in open session and ordered reported favorably the bill, H.R. 1496, 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 1496,
motion to report

Sponsor: Feenstra, Carbahal

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			Date: <u>3/29/23</u>
Stephanie Bice, Oklahoma	1			
Jay Obernolte, California	1			Measure: _____
Chuck Fleischmann, Tennessee				
Darrell Issa, California	1			
Rick Crawford, Arkansas	1			
Claudia Tenney, New York	1			Offered By: _____
Ryan Zinke, Montana	1			
Scott Franklin, Florida	1			Amendment No.: _____
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		

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. 1496 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

In accordance with clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the goal of H.R. 1496 is to authorize an improvement of National Weather Service (NWS) communications abilities by replacing the current legacy system, NWSSchat, with a modern, cloud-based commercial communications system. Upgrading to a commercial cloud communications system alleviates the dissemination issues that the current system has been having and allows for better communication between NWS and local officials as well as their emergency responders.

DUPLICATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(5) of rule XIII, the Committee finds that no provision of H.R. 1496 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. 1496 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.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY,
AND TAX EXPENDITURES

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII, the Committee finds that H.R. 1496 would result in no new or increased budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

With respect to the requirements of clause (3)(c)(3) of rule XIII and section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for H.R. 1713 from the Director of Congressional Budget Office:

H.R. 1496, National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act			
As ordered reported by the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on March 29, 2023			
By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2023	2023-2028	2023-2033
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	11	12
Increases <i>net direct spending</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2034?	No	Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply? No	
Increases <i>on-budget deficits</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2034?	No	Mandate Effects	
		Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

No H.R. 1496 would authorize the appropriation of \$3 million annually over the 2024–2027 period for the National Weather Service (NWS) to replace its current instant messaging system with an updated, cloud-based system. The NWS uses instant messages to share its expertise on making critical warning decisions and other types of significant weather information with public safety officials, emergency personnel, and the media.

Based on spending patterns for similar activities, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1496 would cost \$11 million over the 2023–2028 period and \$1 million after 2028, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

TABLE 1.—ESTIMATED INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION UNDER H.R. 1496

	By fiscal year, millions of dollars—						
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2023– 2028
Authorization	0	3	3	3	3	0	12
Estimated Outlays	0	2	2	3	3	1	11

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Aurora Swanson. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,
Director, Congressional Budget Office.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (new matter is printed in italics and existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

WEATHER RESEARCH AND FORECASTING INNOVATION ACT OF 2017

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

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TITLE IV—FEDERAL WEATHER COORDINATION

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Sec. 415. National Weather Service communications.

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TITLE IV—FEDERAL WEATHER COORDINATION

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SEC. 415. NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS.

(a) *SYSTEM UPGRADE.*—*The Director of the National Weather Service shall improve the instant messaging service used by National Weather Service personnel by implementing a commercial off-the-shelf communications solution hosted on the public cloud to serve as a replacement for the communications system in use as of the date of the enactment of this section (commonly referred to as “NWSChat”). Such communications solution shall satisfy requirements set forth by the Director to best accommodate future growth and perform successfully with increased numbers of users.*

(b) *FUNDING.*—*From amounts made available for Operations, Research, and Facilities, the Director of the National Weather Service shall allocate up to \$3,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2027 to carry out subsection (a).*

(c) LIMITATION ON FUNDING.—Amounts made available to carry out subsection (a) shall be derived from amounts appropriated or otherwise made available to the National Weather Service.

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