



Senate Amendment to H.R. 353 – Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act (Rep. Lucas, R-OK)

CONTACT: [Jennifer Weinhart](mailto:Jennifer.Weinhart@rsc.house.gov), 202-226-0706

FLOOR SCHEDULE:

Expected to be considered on April 4, 2017 under suspension of the rules, which requires a 2/3 vote for passage.

TOPLINE SUMMARY:

[The Senate amendment to H.R. 353](#) would maintain the House-passed weather-related language that would provide for an investment and advancement program for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather research, focusing on observational, computing, and modeling capabilities to improve weather forecasting and prediction of high-impact weather events. It would also increase commercial opportunities for the production of weather data.

The Senate Amendment would add language reauthorizing the NOAA's programs for tsunami detection, forecast, and warnings. It would also require a study to examine coverage gaps in the Next Generation Radar System.

COST:

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate is not yet available.

Rule 28 (a)(1) of Rules of the House Republican Conference for the 114th Congress states that the Republican Leader shall not schedule, or request to have scheduled, any bill or resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules which fails to include a cost estimate. This rule may be waived by a vote of the elected leadership.

Similar provisions were included as a part of [H.R. 1561](#) and [H.R. 34](#) in the 114th Congress. According to information provided courtesy of the Majority Leader's office, H.R. 353 as amended by the Senate would authorize \$189.8 million in fiscal year 2017, \$190.8 million in fiscal year 2018, \$31.8 million in fiscal year 2019, \$31.8 million in fiscal year 2020, and \$25.8 million in fiscal year 2021. All funds would be subject to appropriations.

CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS:

- **Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?** No.
- **Encroach into State or Local Authority?** No.
- **Delegate Any Legislative Authority to the Executive Branch?** No.
- **Contain Earmarks/Limited Tax Benefits/Limited Tariff Benefits?** No.

DETAILED SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

The Senate amendment to H.R. 353 would retain the weather portions of the House-passed bill. A legislative bulletin detailing these provisions can be found [here](#).

Additionally, the Senate amendment would make additions to Title IV, pertaining to federal weather coordination, including:

- Authorizing, through a contractual relationship, the acquisition of backup for the WP-3D Orion and G-IV hurricane aircraft, with the goal of preventing a lapse in availability resulting from single point of failure.
- Authorizing funds for the backup hurricane hunter aircraft for fiscal years 2017-2020 from the funds appropriated to the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations.
- Authorizing a study on the gaps in the Next Generation Weather Radar of the National Weather Service (“NEXRAD”). This study would look at instances of inaccurate forecasts for significant weather events and areas for improvement. It would also require the submission of a report to Congress, and recommendations to improve the program, including through third party consultation.

The Senate amendment also adds a new title, which includes language from the Tsunami Warning, Education, and Research Act of 2017. Specifically, Title V would:

- Reauthorize the Tsunami Warning and Education Act;
- Enhance and modernize the program to improve accuracy;
- Improve standards, guidelines, and research efforts;
- Require at least 80% of the [Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis](#) (DART) buoy array program to be maintained as operational at any given time;
- Geographically define the Tsunami Warning Centers areas of responsibility;
- Require the Tsunami Warning Centers to have uniform operating procedures;
- Require the administrator of the NOAA to work with FEMA to improve community readiness, including the formation of a coordinating committee;
- Require a report to Congress addressing national efforts on rapid emergency response to tsunami events;
- Require research programs to consider other research to mitigate tsunami impact;
- Require the NOAA to provide assistance and training to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the World Meteorological Organization of the United Nations, and other international entities. It would also permit NOAA and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to operate an International Tsunami Information Center to improve tsunami preparedness;
- Authorize a Tsunami Science and Technology Advisory Panel;
- Authorize appropriations of \$25,800,000 for FY16-FY21, of which at least 27% would be directed to activities conducted at the state level under the tsunami hazard mitigation program, and 8% would be directed at the tsunami research program;
- Require the NOAA, in coordination with state and local emergency managers to carry out outreach activities for tsunami education and awareness.
- Allow for the repeal of duplicate provisions;

COMMITTEE ACTION:

H.R. 353 was introduced on January 6, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. The House passed the bill by a voice vote under suspension of the rules on January 9, 2017. The Senate passed an amended version of this legislation by unanimous consent on March 29, 2017.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION:

A Statement of Administration Policy is not yet available.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY:

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following: Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 and Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

NOTE: *RSC Legislative Bulletins are for informational purposes only and should not be taken as statements of support or opposition from the Republican Study Committee.*