

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4802

To provide for the acquisition by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of aircraft for air, atmosphere, and weather reconnaissance and research missions, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 17, 2026

Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. CRUZ, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Mr. WICKER, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. BUDD) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To provide for the acquisition by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of aircraft for air, atmosphere, and weather reconnaissance and research missions, 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 “Hurricane Hunter Air-
5 craft Recapitalization Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ACQUISITION OF AIRCRAFT FOR AIR, ATMOSPHERE,**
2 **AND WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE AND RE-**
3 **SEARCH MISSIONS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 11708 of the Don Young
5 Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022 (division K of
6 Public Law 117–263; 136 Stat. 4158; 33 U.S.C. note
7 prec. 851) is amended—

8 (1) in subsection (a)—

9 (A) by striking “INCREASED” and all that
10 follows through “The Under” and inserting
11 “HURRICANE HUNTER MISSION.—The Under”;

12 (B) by striking “shall acquire” and insert-
13 ing the following: “shall—
14 “(1) acquire and maintain”;

15 (C) by striking “requirements” and all
16 that follows through “air reconnaissance and”
17 and inserting “requirements to meet the Na-
18 tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
19 air reconnaissance and”; and

20 (D) by striking “(B) to ensure” and all
21 that follows through “or nongovernmental enti-
22 ties.” in paragraph (2) and inserting the fol-
23 lowing:

24 “(2) carry out airborne reconnaissance and re-
25 search missions using such aircraft platforms under
26 paragraph (1).”;

1 (2) by redesignating subsections (b), (c), and
2 (d) as subsections (d), (e), and (h), respectively;

3 (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(b) MISSION REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out sub-
6 section (a), the Under Secretary shall—

7 “(1) collect real-time meteorological, oceano-
8 graphic, and atmospheric observations and ensure
9 such data is made available in near real-time for re-
10 search and operational purposes, including fore-
11 casting, warning, and reconnaissance missions;

12 “(2) maintain the capability to safely conduct
13 direct airborne penetration of hurricanes and trop-
14 ical cyclones; and

15 “(3) ensure continuity of airborne hurricane re-
16 connaissance capability during any aircraft recapital-
17 ization or transition period, including through the
18 acquisition and maintenance of backup capabilities
19 sufficient to prevent a single point of failure.

20 “(c) AIRBORNE OBSERVING TECHNOLOGIES.—In
21 carrying out subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall
22 maintain and replace airborne radar and remote sensing
23 capabilities, including Tail Doppler Radar capabilities or
24 successor technologies, necessary to support operational
25 hurricane reconnaissance and forecasting missions.”;

1 (4) in subsection (d) (as so redesignated)—

2 (A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1),
 3 by striking “up to 6” and inserting “not fewer
 4 than 6, but not more than 9, manned”; and

5 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “sub-
 6 paragraph (A)” and inserting “paragraph (1)”;

7 (5) in subsection (e) (as so redesignated), by
 8 striking “agency air reconnaissance and research
 9 mission requirements” and inserting “the mission
 10 requirements described in subsection (b)”;

11 (6) by inserting after subsection (e), as so re-
 12 designated, the following:

13 “(f) MULTIYEAR CONTRACTS.—

14 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary may
 15 enter into multiyear contracts in accordance with
 16 section 3903 of title 41, United States Code, for
 17 purposes of carrying out this section and shall en-
 18 sure compliance with all contract clauses provided in
 19 such section of title 41, United States Code.

20 “(2) EXCEPTION FOR CONTRACT DURATION
 21 LIMITATION.—The limitation on the duration of
 22 such contracts provided under subsection (a) of such
 23 section of title 41, United States Code, shall not
 24 apply to contracts for the acquisition of aircraft in
 25 accordance with this section or the maintenance of

1 such aircraft, including any associated services or
 2 support, provided that such contracts comply with
 3 applicable law and include appropriate safeguards
 4 for any unfunded contingent liability in the event of
 5 cancellation.

6 “(g) NOAA CORPS AVIATION CAPABILITY.—The
 7 Under Secretary shall maintain qualified National Oceanic
 8 and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer
 9 Corps aviators to conduct the airborne reconnaissance and
 10 research missions authorized under subsection (a)(2).”;
 11 and

12 (7) in subsection (h), as so redesignated—

13 (A) by striking “For” and inserting the
 14 following:

15 “(1) ACQUISITION OF AIRCRAFT.—For”;

16 (B) by striking “year 2023” and inserting
 17 “years 2027 through 2031”;

18 (C) by striking “\$800,000,000” and in-
 19 serting “\$2,500,000,000”; and

20 (D) by adding at the end the following:

21 “(2) OMAO AVIATION OPERATIONS AND AIR-
 22 CRAFT SERVICES.—For each of fiscal years 2027
 23 through 2031, there is authorized to be appropriated
 24 to the Under Secretary \$45,000,000 for aviation op-

1 erations and aircraft services by the Office of Marine
 2 and Aviation Operations.”.

3 (b) TRANSFER.—

4 (1) WEATHER RESEARCH AND FORECASTING
 5 INNOVATION ACT OF 2017.—The Weather Research
 6 and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 is amended
 7 by repealing section 413 (15 U.S.C. 8549).

8 (2) DON YOUNG COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION
 9 ACT OF 2022.—The Don Young Coast Guard Author-
 10 ization Act of 2022 is further amended by transfer-
 11 ring section 11708 of such Act, as amended by sub-
 12 section (a), to the Weather Research and Fore-
 13 casting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8501 et
 14 seq.) to appear as section 413 of such Act and re-
 15 designating such section, as so transferred, as sec-
 16 tion 413.

17 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of contents
 18 in section 1(b) of the Weather Research and Forecasting
 19 Innovation Act of 2017 is amended by striking the item
 20 related to section 413 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 413. Acquisition of aircraft for air, atmosphere, and weather reconnais-
 sance and research missions.”.

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