

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 362

To enhance the operation of the AMBER Alert communications network in order to facilitate the recovery of abducted children, to provide for enhanced notification on highways of alerts and information on such children, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 27, 2003

Mr. HEFLEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To enhance the operation of the AMBER Alert communications network in order to facilitate the recovery of abducted children, to provide for enhanced notification on highways of alerts and information on such children, 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 “National AMBER
5 Alert Network Act of 2003”.

1 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL COORDINATION OF AMBER ALERT COM-**
2 **MUNICATIONS NETWORK.**

3 (a) **COORDINATION WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF JUS-**
4 **TICE.**—The Attorney General shall assign an officer of the
5 Department of Justice to act as the national coordinator
6 of the AMBER Alert communications network regarding
7 abducted children. The officer so designated shall be
8 known as the “AMBER Alert Coordinator of the Depart-
9 ment of Justice”.

10 (b) **DUTIES.**—In acting as the national coordinator
11 of the AMBER Alert communications network, the Coor-
12 dinator shall—

13 (1) seek to eliminate gaps in the network, in-
14 cluding gaps in areas of interstate travel;

15 (2) work with States to encourage the develop-
16 ment of additional elements in the network (known
17 as local AMBER plans);

18 (3) work with States to ensure appropriate re-
19 gional coordination of various elements of the net-
20 work; and

21 (4) act as the nationwide point of contact for—

22 (A) the development of the network; and

23 (B) regional coordination of alerts on ab-
24 ducted children through the network.

25 (c) **CONSULTATION WITH FEDERAL BUREAU OF IN-**
26 **VESTIGATION.**—In carrying out duties under subsection

1 (b), the Coordinator shall notify and consult with the Di-
2 rector of the Federal Bureau of Investigation concerning
3 each child abduction for which an alert is issued through
4 the AMBER Alert communications network.

5 (d) COOPERATION.—The Coordinator shall cooperate
6 with the Secretary of Transportation and the Federal
7 Communications Commission in carrying out activities
8 under this section.

9 **SEC. 3. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ISSUANCE AND DIS-**
10 **SEMINATION OF ALERTS THROUGH AMBER**
11 **ALERT COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK.**

12 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF MINIMUM STANDARDS.—
13 Subject to subsection (b), the AMBER Alert Coordinator
14 of the Department of Justice shall establish minimum
15 standards for—

16 (1) the issuance of alerts through the AMBER
17 Alert communications network; and

18 (2) the extent of the dissemination of alerts
19 issued through the network.

20 (b) LIMITATIONS.—

21 (1) ADOPTABLE ON VOLUNTARY BASIS.—The
22 minimum standards established under subsection (a)
23 shall be adoptable on a voluntary basis only.

24 (2) GEOGRAPHIC AREA.—The minimum stand-
25 ards shall provide, to the maximum extent prac-

1 ticable (as determined by the Coordinator in con-
2 sultation with State and local law enforcement agen-
3 cies), that the dissemination of an alert through the
4 AMBER Alert communications network be limited
5 to the geographic areas most likely to facilitate the
6 recovery of the abducted child concerned.

7 (3) PROTECTION OF EXISTING SYSTEM.—In
8 carrying out activities under subsection (a), the Co-
9 ordinator may not interfere with the system of vol-
10 untary coordination between local broadcasters and
11 State and local law enforcement agencies in effect on
12 the day before the date of enactment of this Act for
13 purposes of the AMBER Alert communications net-
14 work.

15 (c) COOPERATION.—

16 (1) FEDERAL.—The Coordinator shall cooper-
17 ate with the Secretary of Transportation and the
18 Federal Communications Commission in carrying
19 out activities under this section.

20 (2) STATE AND LOCAL.—The Coordinator shall
21 also cooperate with local broadcasters and State and
22 local law enforcement agencies in establishing min-
23 imum standards under this section.

1 **SEC. 4. GRANT PROGRAM FOR NOTIFICATION AND COMMU-**
2 **NICATIONS SYSTEMS ALONG HIGHWAYS FOR**
3 **RECOVERY OF ABDUCTED CHILDREN.**

4 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Trans-
5 portation shall carry out a program to provide grants to
6 States for the development or enhancement of notification
7 or communications systems along highways for alerts and
8 other information for the recovery of abducted children.

9 (b) ACTIVITIES.—Activities funded by grants under
10 the program under subsection (a) may include—

11 (1) the development or enhancement of elec-
12 tronic message boards along highways and the place-
13 ment of additional signage along highways; and

14 (2) the development or enhancement of other
15 means of disseminating alerts and other information
16 for the recovery of abducted children along high-
17 ways.

18 (c) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost
19 of any activities funded by a grant under the program
20 under subsection (a) may not exceed 50 percent.

21 (d) DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT AMOUNTS ON GEO-
22 GRAPHIC BASIS.—The Secretary shall ensure, to the max-
23 imum extent practicable, the distribution of grants under
24 the program under subsection (a) on an equitable basis
25 throughout the various regions of the United States.

1 (e) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall prescribe
2 requirements, including application requirements, for
3 grants under the program under subsection (a).

4 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
6 appropriated \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2004 to
7 carry out this section.

8 (2) PERIOD OF AVAILABILITY.—Amounts ap-
9 propriated pursuant to the authorization of appro-
10 priations in paragraph (1) shall remain available
11 until expended.

12 **SEC. 5. GRANT PROGRAM FOR SUPPORT OF AMBER ALERT**
13 **COMMUNICATIONS PLANS.**

14 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Attorney General
15 shall carry out a program to provide grants to States for
16 the development or enhancement of programs and activi-
17 ties for the support of AMBER Alert communications
18 plans.

19 (b) ACTIVITIES.—Activities funded by grants under
20 the program under subsection (a) may include—

21 (1) the development and implementation of edu-
22 cation and training programs, and associated mate-
23 rials, relating to AMBER Alert communications
24 plans;

1 (2) the development and implementation of law
2 enforcement programs, and associated equipment,
3 relating to AMBER Alert communications plans;
4 and

5 (3) such other activities as the Secretary con-
6 siders appropriate for supporting the AMBER Alert
7 communications program.

8 (c) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost
9 of any activities funded by a grant under the program
10 under subsection (a) may not exceed 50 percent.

11 (d) DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT AMOUNTS ON GEO-
12 GRAPHIC BASIS.—The Attorney General shall ensure, to
13 the maximum extent practicable, the distribution of grants
14 under the program under subsection (a) on an equitable
15 basis throughout the various regions of the United States.

16 (e) ADMINISTRATION.—The Attorney General shall
17 prescribe requirements, including application require-
18 ments, for grants under the program under subsection (a).

19 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
21 appropriated \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2004 to
22 carry out this section.

23 (2) PERIOD OF AVAILABILITY.—Amounts ap-
24 propriated pursuant to the authorization of appro-

1 priations in paragraph (1) shall remain available
2 until expended.

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