

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 572

To require the Secretary of Commerce to study the coverage gaps of the Next Generation Weather Radar of the National Weather Service and to develop a plan for improving radar coverage and hazardous weather detection and forecasting, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 8, 2017

Mr. BURR (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mr. TILLIS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Commerce to study the coverage gaps of the Next Generation Weather Radar of the National Weather Service and to develop a plan for improving radar coverage and hazardous weather detection and forecasting, 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. STUDY ON GAPS IN NEXRAD COVERAGE AND**
4 **REQUIREMENT FOR PLAN TO ADDRESS SUCH**
5 **GAPS.**

6 (a) STUDY ON GAPS IN NEXRAD COVERAGE.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after
2 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
3 of Commerce shall complete a study on gaps in the
4 coverage of the Next Generation Weather Radar of
5 the National Weather Service (referred to in this
6 section as “NEXRAD”).

7 (2) ELEMENTS.—In conducting the study re-
8 quired under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

9 (A) identify areas in the United States
10 with limited or no NEXRAD coverage below
11 6,000 feet above ground level of the sur-
12 rounding terrain;

13 (B) for the areas identified under subpara-
14 graph (A)—

15 (i) identify the key weather effects for
16 which prediction would improve with im-
17 proved radar detection;

18 (ii) identify additional sources of ob-
19 servations for high impact weather that
20 were available and operational for such
21 areas on the day before the date of the en-
22 actment of this Act, including Terminal
23 Doppler Weather Radar (commonly known
24 as “TDWR”), air surveillance radars of

1 the Federal Aviation Administration, and
2 cooperative network observers; and

3 (iii) assess the feasibility and advis-
4 ability of efforts to integrate and upgrade
5 Federal radar capabilities that are not
6 owned or controlled by the National Oce-
7 anic and Atmospheric Administration, in-
8 cluding radar capabilities of the Federal
9 Aviation Administration and the Depart-
10 ment of Defense;

11 (C) assess the feasibility and advisability of
12 incorporating State-operated and other non-
13 Federal radars into the operations of the Na-
14 tional Weather Service;

15 (D) identify options to improve radar cov-
16 erage in the areas identified under subpara-
17 graph (A); and

18 (E) estimate the cost of, and develop a
19 timeline for, carrying out each of the options
20 identified under subparagraph (D).

21 (3) REPORT.—Upon the completion of the
22 study required under paragraph (1), the Secretary
23 shall submit to the Committee on Commerce,
24 Science, and Transportation of the Senate, the Com-
25 mittee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Com-

mittee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Secretary with respect to the study.

(b) PLAN TO IMPROVE RADAR COVERAGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary completes the plan required by subsection (a)(1), the Secretary of Commerce shall submit to the congressional committees referred to in subsection (a)(3) a plan for improving radar coverage in the areas identified under subsection (a)(2)(A) by integrating and upgrading, to the extent practicable, additional observation solutions to improve hazardous weather detection and forecasting.

(2) REQUIREMENT FOR THIRD-PARTY REVIEWS.—The Secretary shall seek third-party reviews on scientific methodology relating to, and the feasibility and advisability of, implementing the plan submitted under paragraph (1), including the extent to which warning and forecast services of the National Weather Service would be improved by additional NEXRAD coverage.

