H. R. 5324

To provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, and for other purposes.

A BILL

To provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “NOAA Weather Radio Modernization Act of 2021” or the “NWR Modernization Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:
(1) **ADMINISTRATOR.**—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) **NOAA WEATHER RADIO.**—The term “NOAA Weather Radio” means the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network.

**SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

Congress finds the following:

(1) The NOAA Weather Radio is a nationwide network of transmitters that are critical to protecting life and property by broadcasting weather and other hazard alerts.

(2) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts currently reach 95 percent of the United States population.

(3) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts originate from all National Weather Service Offices, but are only available via a receiver located in sufficient proximity to a radio transmitting tower.

(4) There are limited options to obtain NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts via the Internet or mobile device application, which are provided by volunteer mechanisms obtaining the audio feed in an ad hoc manner.
(5) NOAA Weather Radio should provide equal
access and availability to unimpeded broadcasts of
weather and non-weather hazards to every person lo-
cated within the United States, its territories, and
tribal lands.

SEC. 4. UPGRADING EXISTING SYSTEMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall, to the
maximum extent practicable, expand coverage of the
NOAA Weather Radio and ensure its reliability. In doing
so, the Administrator shall—

(1) maintain support for existing systems serv-
ing areas not covered by cellular service or having
poor quality cellular service;

(2) ensure consistent maintenance of, and time-
ly repairs to, broadcast towers and antennas; and

(3) enhance the ability to amplify Non-Weather
Emergency Messages via NOAA Weather Radio as
necessary.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
$20,000,000, to remain available until expended.

SEC. 5. MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In parallel to the activities under
section 4, the Administrator shall, to the maximum extent
practicable, provide upgrades to the NOAA Weather Radio
to ensure its capabilities and coverage remain valuable to
the public. In carrying out these activities, the Adminis-
trator shall—

(1) provide upgrades to the telecommunications
infrastructure to accelerate the transition of broad-
casts to Internet Protocol-based communications
over non-copper media;

(2) accelerate software upgrades to the Ad-
vanced Weather Interactive Processing System in
order to implement partial county notifications and
alerts;

(3) consult with private sector entities to ensure
that NOAA Weather Radio data and feeds are easily
accessible in a format and manner most beneficial
for use by third-party products;

(4) develop options, including satellite backup
capability, for NOAA Weather Radio continuity in
the event of Weather Forecast Office outages;

(5) research and develop alternative options, in-
cluding microwave capabilities, to transmit NOAA
Weather Radio signals to transmitters that are re-

tome or that do not have Internet Protocol capa-
bility; and

(6) transition critical applications to the Inte-
grated Dissemination Program.
(b) PRIORITY.—In carrying out the objectives described in subsection (a), the Administrator shall prioritize practices, capabilities, and technologies most capable of making real-time warning information and broadcasts available online.

(c) ASSESSMENT FOR MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall complete an assessment of access to NOAA Weather Radio. In conducting such an assessment, the Administrator shall take into consideration and provide recommendations on—

(1) the need for continuous, adequate, and operational real-time broadcasts of the NOAA Weather Radio in both urban and rural areas;

(2) the availability of online services, such as websites and mobile device applications, that require NOAA Weather Radio access;

(3) existing or new management systems, which promote consistent, efficient, and compatible access to NOAA Weather Radio;

(4) the ability of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to aggregate real time broadcast feeds at one or more central locations;

(5) effective interagency coordination; and
(6) any other function the Administrator deems necessary.

(d) Authorization of Appropriations.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $40,000,000, to remain available until expended.