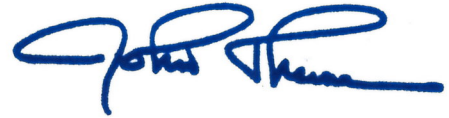


Modified

S.L.C.



AMENDMENT NO. \_\_\_\_\_ Calendar No. \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.

**IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—114th Cong., 1st Sess.**

**S. 1573**

To improve communication from the National Weather Service regarding severe weather risks, and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_ and ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE intended to be proposed by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ)

Viz:

1 Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:  
2

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Weather Alerts for  
5 a Ready Nation Act of 2015”.

6 **SEC. 2. WARNING COORDINATION METEOROLOGISTS AT**  
7 **WEATHER FORECAST OFFICES OF NATIONAL**  
8 **WEATHER SERVICE.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the National  
10 Weather Service shall employ at least 1 warning coordina-

1 tion meteorologist at each weather forecast office of the  
2 National Weather Service.

3 (b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each warning coordination  
4 meteorologist employed under subsection (a) shall—

5 (1) be responsible for providing service to the  
6 geographic area of responsibility covered by the  
7 weather forecast office at which the warning coordi-  
8 nation meteorologist is employed to help ensure that  
9 users of products of the National Weather Service  
10 can respond effectively to improve outcomes from  
11 weather events;

12 (2) liaise with users of products and services of  
13 the National Weather Service, such as the public,  
14 media outlets, users in the aviation, marine, and ag-  
15 ricultural communities, and forestry, land, and water  
16 management interests, to evaluate the adequacy and  
17 usefulness of the products and services of the Na-  
18 tional Weather Service;

19 (3) collaborate with such weather forecast of-  
20 fices and State, local, and tribal government agen-  
21 cies as the Director considers appropriate in devel-  
22 oping, proposing, and implementing plans to develop,  
23 modify, or tailor products and services of the Na-  
24 tional Weather Service to improve the usefulness of  
25 such products and services;

1           (4) ensure the maintenance and accuracy of se-  
2       vere weather call lists, appropriate office severe  
3       weather policy or procedures, and other severe  
4       weather or dissemination methodologies or strate-  
5       gies; and

6           (5) work closely with State, local, and tribal  
7       emergency management agencies, and other agencies  
8       related to disaster management, to ensure a  
9       planned, coordinated, and effective preparedness ef-  
10      fort.

11       (c) **ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.**—A warning co-  
12      ordination meteorologist employed under subsection (a)  
13      may—

14           (1) work with a State agency to develop plans  
15      for promoting more effective use of products and  
16      services of the National Weather Service throughout  
17      the State;

18           (2) identify priority community preparedness  
19      objectives;

20           (3) develop plans to meet the objectives identi-  
21      fied in paragraph (2); and

22           (4) conduct severe weather event preparedness  
23      planning and citizen education efforts with and  
24      through various State, local, and tribal government

1 agencies and other disaster management-related or-  
2 ganizations.

3 (d) PLACEMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL EMER-  
4 GENCY MANAGERS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this section,  
6 the Director may place a warning coordination mete-  
7 orologist employed under subsection (a) with a State  
8 or local emergency manager if the Director considers  
9 doing so is necessary or convenient to carry out this  
10 section.

11 (2) TREATMENT.—If the Director determines  
12 that the placement of a warning coordination mete-  
13 orologist placed with a State or local emergency  
14 manager under paragraph (1) is near a weather  
15 forecast office of the National Weather Service, such  
16 placement shall be treated as employment of the  
17 warning coordination meteorologist at such weather  
18 forecast office for purposes of subsection (a).

19 (e) DEFINITION OF STATE.—In this section, the term  
20 “State” means a State, a territory, or possession of the  
21 United States, including a Commonwealth, or the District  
22 of Columbia.

1 **SEC. 3. IMPROVING NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOS-**  
2 **PHERIC ADMINISTRATION COMMUNICATION**  
3 **OF HAZARDOUS WEATHER AND WATER**  
4 **EVENTS.**

5 (a) **PURPOSE OF SYSTEM.**—For purposes of the as-  
6 sessment required by subsection (b)(1)(A), the purpose of  
7 the system of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-  
8 ministration for issuing watches and warnings regarding  
9 hazardous weather and water events shall be risk commu-  
10 nication to the general public that informs action to pre-  
11 vent loss of life and property.

12 (b) **ASSESSMENT OF SYSTEM.**—

13 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 2 years after  
14 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
15 trator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-  
16 ministration shall—

17 (A) assess the system of the National Oce-  
18 anic and Atmospheric Administration for  
19 issuing watches and warnings regarding haz-  
20 ardous weather and water events; and

21 (B) submit to Congress a report on the  
22 findings of the Administrator with respect to  
23 the assessment conducted under subparagraph  
24 (A).

25 (2) **ELEMENTS.**—The assessment required by  
26 paragraph (1)(A) shall include the following:

1           (A) An evaluation of whether the system of  
2           the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-  
3           istration for issuing watches and warnings re-  
4           garding hazardous weather and water events  
5           meets the purpose described in subsection (a).

6           (B) Development of recommendations  
7           for—

8                   (i) legislative and administrative ac-  
9                   tion to improve the system described in  
10                  such subparagraph; and

11                   (ii) such research as the Adminis-  
12                  trator considers necessary to address the  
13                  focus areas described in paragraph (3).

14           (3) FOCUS AREAS.—The assessment required  
15           by paragraph (1)(A) shall focus on the following:

16                   (A) Ways to communicate the risks posed  
17                   by hazardous weather or water events to the  
18                   public that are most likely to result in action to  
19                   mitigate the risk.

20                   (B) Ways to communicate the risks posed  
21                   by hazardous weather or water events to the  
22                   public as broadly and rapidly as practicable.

23                   (C) Ways to preserve the benefits of the  
24                   existing watches and warnings system.

1           (D) Ways to maintain the utility of the  
2 watches and warnings system for Government  
3 and commercial users of the system.

4           (4) CONSULTATION.—In conducting the assess-  
5 ment required by paragraph (1)(A), the Adminis-  
6 trator shall—

7           (A) consult with such line offices within  
8 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-  
9 istration as the Administrator considers rel-  
10 evant, including the National Ocean Service,  
11 the National Weather Service, and the Office of  
12 Oceanic and Atmospheric Research;

13           (B) consult with individuals in the aca-  
14 demic sector, including individuals in the field  
15 of social and behavioral sciences, and other  
16 weather services;

17           (C) consult with media outlets that will be  
18 distributing the watches and warnings;

19           (D) consult with non-Federal forecasters  
20 that produce alternate severe weather risk com-  
21 munication products;

22           (E) consult with emergency planners and  
23 responders, including State and local emergency  
24 management agencies, and other government  
25 users of the watches and warnings system, in-

1 including the Federal Emergency Management  
2 Agency, the Office of Personnel Management,  
3 the Coast Guard, and such other Federal agen-  
4 cies as the Administrator determines rely on  
5 watches and warnings for operational decisions;  
6 and

7 (F) make use of the services of the Na-  
8 tional Academy of Sciences, as the Adminis-  
9 trator considers necessary and practicable, in-  
10 cluding contracting with the National Research  
11 Council to review the scientific and technical  
12 soundness of the assessment required by para-  
13 graph (1)(A), including the recommendations  
14 developed under paragraph (2)(B).

15 (5) METHODOLOGIES.—In conducting the as-  
16 sessment required by paragraph (1)(A), the Admin-  
17 istrator shall use such methodologies as the Admin-  
18 istrator considers are generally accepted by the  
19 weather enterprise, including social and behavioral  
20 sciences.

21 (c) IMPROVEMENTS TO SYSTEM.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall,  
23 based on the assessment required by subsection  
24 (b)(1)(A), take such actions as the Administrator  
25 considers necessary—



1 (A) subject to paragraph (2), to improve  
2 the system of the Administration for issuing  
3 watches and warnings regarding hazardous  
4 weather and water events; and

5 (B) to support efforts to satisfy research  
6 needs to enable future improvements to such  
7 system.

8 (2) REQUIREMENTS REGARDING MAJOR  
9 CHANGES.—In carrying out paragraph (1)(A), the  
10 Administrator shall ensure that any change to the  
11 system described in such paragraph that the Admin-  
12 istrator considers a major change—

13 (A) is validated by social and behavioral  
14 science using a generalizable sample;

15 (B) accounts for the needs of various de-  
16 mographics, vulnerable populations, and geo-  
17 graphic regions;

18 (C) accounts for the differences between  
19 types of weather and water hazards;

20 (D) responds to the needs of Federal,  
21 State, and local government partners and media  
22 partners; and

23 (E) accounts for necessary changes to Fed-  
24 erally-operated watch and warning propagation  
25 and dissemination infrastructure and protocols.

1           (3) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than the  
2           date that is 4 years after the date of the enactment  
3           of this Act and not less frequently than once each  
4           year thereafter until the Administrator determines  
5           that the actions required by paragraph (1) have  
6           been completed, the Administrator shall submit to  
7           Congress a report on the actions taken by the Ad-  
8           ministrator pursuant to such paragraph.

9           (4) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than the date  
10          that the Administrator determines that the actions  
11          required by paragraph (1) have been completed, the  
12          Administrator shall submit to Congress a report that  
13          summarizes all of the actions taken by the Adminis-  
14          trator pursuant to paragraph (1).

15          (d) WATCHES AND WARNINGS DEFINED.—

16           (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
17           graph (2), in this section, the term “watch” and  
18           “warning”, with respect to a hazardous weather and  
19           water event, means a product issued by the Adminis-  
20           tration, intended for consumption by the general  
21           public, to alert the general public to the potential for  
22           or presence of the event and to inform action to pre-  
23           vent loss of life and property.

24           (2) EXCEPTION.—In this section, the term  
25           “watch” and “warning” do not include technical or

1 specialized meteorological and hydrological forecasts,  
2 outlooks, or model guidance products.

3 **SEC. 4. REPORT ON CONTRACT POSITIONS AT NATIONAL**  
4 **WEATHER SERVICE.**

5 (a) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—Not later than 180 days  
6 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
7 trator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-  
8 tration shall submit to Congress a report on the use of  
9 contractors at the National Weather Service for the most  
10 recently completed fiscal year.

11 (b) **CONTENTS.**—The report required by subsection  
12 (a) shall include, with respect to the most recently com-  
13 pleted fiscal year, the following:

14 (1) The total number of full-time equivalent  
15 employees at the National Weather Service,  
16 disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General  
17 Schedule.

18 (2) The total number of full-time equivalent  
19 contractors at the National Weather Service,  
20 disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General  
21 Schedule that most closely approximates their du-  
22 ties.

23 (3) The total number of vacant positions at the  
24 National Weather Service on the day before the date

1 of the enactment of this Act, disaggregated by each  
2 equivalent level of the General Schedule.

3 (4) The 5 most common positions filled by full-  
4 time equivalent contractors at the National Weather  
5 Service and equivalent level of the General Schedule  
6 that most closely approximates the duties of such  
7 positions.

8 (5) Of the positions identified in paragraph (4),  
9 the percentage of full-time equivalent contractors in  
10 those positions that have held a prior position at the  
11 National Weather Service or another entity in the  
12 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

13 (6) The average full-time equivalent salary for  
14 Federal employees at the National Weather Service  
15 for each equivalent level of the General Schedule.

16 (7) The average salary for full-time equivalent  
17 contractors performing at each equivalent level of  
18 the General Schedule at the National Weather Serv-  
19 ice.

20 (8) A description of any actions taken by the  
21 Administrator to respond to the issues raised by the  
22 Inspector General of the Department of Commerce  
23 regarding the hiring of former National Oceanic and  
24 Atmospheric Administration employees as contrac-  
25 tors at the National Weather Service, such as the

1 issues raised in the Investigative Report dated June  
2 2015 (OIG-12-0447).

3 (c) ANNUAL PUBLICATION.—For each fiscal year  
4 after the fiscal year covered by the report required by sub-  
5 section (a), the Administrator shall, not later than 180  
6 days after the completion of the fiscal year, publish on  
7 a publicly accessible Internet website the information de-  
8 scribed in paragraphs (1) through (6) of subsection (b)  
9 for such fiscal year.