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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To waive certain legal requirements to permit the Director of the National Weather Service to expeditiously hire for positions that are critical for public safety, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FLOOD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To waive certain legal requirements to permit the Director of the National Weather Service to expeditiously hire for positions that are critical for public safety, 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 “Weather Workforce
5 Improvement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

1 (1) accurate and timely weather forecasting is
2 of vital importance;

3 (2) employees of the National Weather Service,
4 particularly employees responsible for the regular
5 launching of weather balloons, are critical for public
6 safety; and

7 (3) staffing positions relating to the regular
8 launching of weather balloons should be prioritized
9 and categorized as critical for public safety.

10 **SEC. 3. STAFFING FOR POSITIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY AT**
11 **THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.**

12 (a) DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY.—The Director of the
13 National Weather Service may appoint, without regard to
14 the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 (other than
15 sections 3303, 3307, and 3328 of such chapter) of title
16 5, United States Code, qualified candidates to any of the
17 following positions to satisfy critical staffing needs and fill
18 vacancies at the Service:

19 (1) Employees performing public safety mission
20 functions, including the following:

21 (A) Meteorologists (classification series
22 1340).

23 (B) General physical scientists (classifica-
24 tion series 1301).

1 (C) Hydrologists (classification series
2 1315).

3 (D) Computer specialists (classification se-
4 ries 334).

5 (E) Electronic technicians (classification
6 series 856).

7 (2) Other positions for which primary respon-
8 sibilities include equipment operations, maintenance,
9 and analysis, information technology, or engineering.

10 (b) SUNSET.—The authority under subsection (a)
11 shall expire on the earlier of—

12 (1) the date that is 2 years after the date of the
13 enactment of this Act; or

14 (2) the date on which all positions to satisfy to
15 critical staffing needs and vacancies have been filled.

16 (c) NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE PUBLIC SAFETY
17 DESIGNATION.—The Director of the Office of Personal
18 Management shall designate the positions specified in sub-
19 section (a) as pertaining to public safety.

20 (d) NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE PUBLIC SAFETY
21 PRIORITY; WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Title I of the Weather Re-
23 search and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15
24 U.S.C. 8511 et seq.), is amended—

1 (A) in section 101 (15 U.S.C. 8511), by
2 adding at the end the following new sentence:
3 “The Under Secretary shall ensure the National
4 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration re-
5 mains focused on providing accurate and timely
6 weather forecasts that protect lives and prop-
7 erty and enhance the national economy by dis-
8 seminating to the public and core partners
9 through nimble, flexible, and mobile methods
10 critical weather information and impact-based
11 decision support services.”;

12 (B) by redesignating section 110 (15
13 U.S.C. 8519), as section 111; and

14 (C) by inserting after section 109, the fol-
15 lowing new section:

16 **“SEC. 110. NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WORKFORCE AS-**
17 **SESSMENT.**

18 **“(a) HIRING ASSESSMENT.—**

19 **“(1) IN GENERAL.—**Not later than 1 year after
20 the date of the enactment of this section and annu-
21 ally thereafter, the Director of the National Weather
22 Service shall submit to the Under Secretary, the
23 Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the
24 House of Representatives, and the Committee on
25 Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Sen-

1 ate an assessment of the milestones, timelines, and
2 service level expectations required for the hiring and
3 timely on-boarding of employees of the National
4 Weather Service.

5 “(2) ELEMENTS.—Each assessment under
6 paragraph (1) may include determinations of the
7 number of employees of the National Weather Serv-
8 ice required at each forecasting office to provide
9 services to protect lives and property and enhance
10 the national economy in the geographic region of re-
11 sponsibility.

12 “(b) HEALTH AND MORALE ASSESSMENT.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
14 the date of the enactment of this section and annu-
15 ally thereafter, the Director of the National Weather
16 Service shall submit to the Committee on Science,
17 Space, and Technology of the House of Representa-
18 tives, and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
19 Transportation of the Senate an assessment of med-
20 ical impacts, including stress and long-term health
21 impacts, on employees of the National Weather
22 Service, including such employees’ morale, related to
23 required rotating shift work.

24 “(2) COORDINATION.—The Director of the Na-
25 tional Weather Service is authorized to enter into a

1 contract with a private sector entity to conduct the
2 assessment required under paragraph (1).

3 “(3) ELEMENTS.—Each assessment under
4 paragraph (1) may include the following:

5 “(A) Options for mitigating the impacts on
6 employees identified in each such assessment.

7 “(B) Recommendations for improving ben-
8 efits related to required rotating shift work.”.

9 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of con-
10 tents in section 1(b) of Weather Research and Fore-
11 casting Innovation Act of 2017 is amended by strik-
12 ing the item relating to section 110 and inserting
13 the following new items:

“Sec. 110. National Weather Service workforce assessment.

“Sec. 111. Authorization of appropriations.”.