

[S. 1180, the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Modernization Act of 2015](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, March 21, 2016, the House will consider [S. 1180](#), the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Modernization Act of 2015, under suspension of the rules. S. 1180 was introduced on May 4, 2015 by Senator Rob Johnson (R-WI) and was referred to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which ordered the bill reported favorably. The bill was passed without amendment by Unanimous Consent in the Senate on July 9, 2015.

SUMMARY

S. 1180 authorizes activities to operate and modernize the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) within the Department of Homeland Security over the 2016-2018 period. Specifically, this bill:

- Directs the Administrator of FEMA to modernize and implement IPAWS to ensure the President and federal and state local governments can disseminate timely and effective warnings across multiple communications technologies regarding natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters or threats to public safety;
- Requires the Administrator to conduct training, tests, and exercises for the public alert and warning system, including raising awareness and education among state and local partners;
- Ensures the system is resilient and secure and can withstand acts of terrorism and other external attacks; and
- Directs the Administrator to establish a subcommittee to the National Advisory Council to develop recommendations for an integrated public alert and warning system for protocols, standards, operating procedures, capabilities, and any additional modernization efforts that are necessary.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror. FEMA was established in 1979

through Executive Order by President Carter to centralize the federal government's emergency response and increase coordination during disasters. After operating for nearly 30 years without explicit authorization, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 authorized FEMA for the first time in legislation. That authorization has since expired.¹

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) is the nation's alert and warning infrastructure. IPAWS provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System, the Wireless Emergency Alerts, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio.²

According to the bill sponsor, "In times of emergency, information is crucial. This bill takes important steps to expand our nation's public warning system to ensure the largest number of people are reached. The IPAWS Modernization Act of 2015 also ensures effective training and collaboration so that when an emergency hits, we are ready,"³

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that implementing S. 1180 would cost \$37 million over the next five years, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts over the 2016-2018 period. Enacting this legislation would not affect direct spending or revenues, therefore pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jake Vreeburg](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 3-1555.

¹ See FEMA's website ["About the Agency"](#)

² See FEMA's website ["Integrated Public Alert and Warning System"](#)

³ See Sen. Johnson's Press Release, ["Johnson Introduces Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Legislation"](#) May 4, 2015.