

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2909

To establish an interagency working group to study the use of unmanned aircraft systems for wildland firefighting, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 25, 2015

Ms. SINEMA (for herself, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. STEWART, Mr. GOSAR, Mr. SALMON, and Ms. MCSALLY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture and Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish an interagency working group to study the use of unmanned aircraft systems for wildland firefighting, 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 “Protecting Firefighters
5 and Promoting Innovation Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON THE USE OF**
2 **UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS FOR**
3 **WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after
5 the date of enactment of this Act, the President shall es-
6 tablish an interagency working group to study the use of
7 unmanned aircraft systems for wildland firefighting.

8 (b) MEMBERS.—The working group established
9 under subsection (a) shall include—

10 (1) the Administrator of the Federal Aviation
11 Administration and the Secretary of the Interior,
12 who shall serve as co-chairs of the working group;

13 (2) one representative, selected by the co-chairs,
14 with wildland firefighting experience from each of—

15 (A) a State firefighting agency;

16 (B) a local firefighting agency; and

17 (C) a volunteer firefighting agency; and

18 (3) at least one senior-level representative from
19 each of—

20 (A) the Department of Agriculture;

21 (B) the National Aeronautics and Space
22 Administration;

23 (C) the National Guard Bureau;

24 (D) the Federal Emergency Management
25 Agency; and

1 (E) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
2 Administration.

3 (c) FUNCTIONS.—The working group established
4 under subsection (a) shall carry out functions including
5 the following:

6 (1) In consultation with national fire service or-
7 ganizations, adjutants general from States affected
8 by wildland fires, representatives from relevant in-
9 dustries, and other stakeholders developing stand-
10 ards and best practices for the use of unmanned air-
11 craft systems for wildland firefighting to—

12 (A) assist in fire suppression;

13 (B) provide real-time updates for fire-
14 fighters; and

15 (C) reduce the risk of firefighter fatalities
16 due to wildland firefighting and to aircraft acci-
17 dents related to wildland firefighting.

18 (2) Assessing existing Federal unmanned air-
19 craft systems to identify opportunities to use such
20 existing systems to lower the costs of the use of un-
21 manned aircraft systems for wildland firefighting.

22 (3) Assessing opportunities to improve inter-
23 agency coordination with respect to the use of un-
24 manned aircraft systems for wildland firefighting.

1 (4) With respect to the use of unmanned air-
2 craft systems for wildland firefighting, assessing—

3 (A) the efficacy of current technology; and

4 (B) the potential efficacy of emerging tech-
5 nology.

6 (5) In consultation with legal experts, assessing
7 the implications for the Fourth Amendment of the
8 Constitution of any standards, best practices, or rec-
9 ommendations under this section with respect to the
10 use of unmanned aircraft systems.

11 (d) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
12 of the establishment of the working group under sub-
13 section (a), the co-chairs of the working group shall sub-
14 mit to the committees of the House of Representatives and
15 the Senate with relevant jurisdiction and the National
16 Wildfire Coordinating Group a report containing the re-
17 sults of the work of the working group. Such report shall
18 include—

19 (1) the standards and best practices developed
20 under paragraph (1) of subsection (e);

21 (2) a summary of the assessments under para-
22 graphs (2), (3), (4), and (5) of such subsection; and

23 (3) any recommendations with respect to the
24 use of unmanned aircraft systems for wildland fire-
25 fighting.

1 (e) UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM DEFINED.—In
2 this section, the term “unmanned aircraft system” has the
3 meaning given such term in section 331 of the FAA Mod-
4 ernization and Reform Act of 2012 (49 U.S.C. 40101
5 note).

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