



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 3, 2017

S. 171

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments and Hydrographic Services Improvement Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2017

As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on January 24, 2017

SUMMARY

The bill would authorize the appropriation of \$183 million annually through 2021 for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct certain hydrographic activities (the measurement and description of features that affect maritime navigation). S. 171 also would modify recruiting policies for the NOAA commissioned officer corps.

CBO estimates that implementing S. 171 would cost \$697 million over the 2018-2022 period and \$28 million after 2022, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts. Enacting the legislation would affect direct spending and revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. However, CBO estimates that any such effects would be insignificant.

CBO estimates that enacting the legislation would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

S. 171 would impose intergovernmental and private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). CBO estimates that the costs of those mandates would fall below the annual thresholds established in UMRA for intergovernmental and private-sector mandates (\$78 million and \$156 million in 2017, respectively, adjusted annually for inflation).

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary effect of S. 171 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars						2018- 2022
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION							
Authorization Level	0	183	183	183	183	0	732
Estimated Outlays	0	114	157	178	181	67	697

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that the legislation will be enacted late in 2017 and that the authorized amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year beginning in 2018.

Spending Subject to Appropriation

CBO estimates that implementing S. 171 would cost \$697 million over the 2018-2022 period, mostly for hydrographic activities authorized under the bill.

Hydrographic Activities. Title V would authorize the appropriation of \$183 million a year through 2021 to carry out hydrographic activities, including nautical mapping and charting, collecting hydrographic data, maintaining a geodetic reference system (a worldwide coordinate system used for navigation purposes), and measuring tides and currents. In 2016, NOAA allocated \$207 million to carry out similar activities. CBO estimates that implementing title V would cost \$697 million over the 2018-2022 period.

Recruiting. Title I would authorize NOAA to spend appropriated funds to recruit members for the commissioned officer corps. NOAA allocated about \$400,000 to recruiting in 2016. Because NOAA is performing similar tasks under its current authority, CBO estimates that implementing this section would have no effect on the federal budget.

Title II would authorize NOAA to pay certain expenses related to higher education for people serving in the commissioned officer corps or those who commit to serve in the corps after completing a college degree. Based on an analysis of information provided by the agency about the number of officers who would receive such assistance, CBO estimates that implementing this provision would cost less than \$500,000 a year.

Direct Spending and Revenues

Title II would make it illegal for anyone to wear the uniform of NOAA's commissioned officer corps without proper authorization. Violators would be subject to criminal

penalties, which are treated as revenues; however, CBO estimates that any amounts collected would be insignificant. Furthermore, any such revenues would be deposited into the Crime Victims Fund and would be available to be spent without further appropriation. Therefore, the net effect on the deficit from enacting this provision would be negligible.

Title III would establish service requirements for people enlisting in NOAA's commissioned officer corps. Under the bill, any officer who fails to meet those requirements would be obligated to repay NOAA an amount equal to the costs incurred to train that officer. Based on an analysis of information provided by NOAA regarding the cost of such training, CBO estimates that the total amount of payments to NOAA from officers who fail to meet their service obligations would be insignificant (such payments would be offsetting receipts, which are recorded as reductions in direct spending).

Title V would allow NOAA to collect and spend, without further appropriation, monetary gifts to finance costs associated with planning the construction of a new port facility. Such gifts would be recorded as offsetting receipts. Because CBO expects that any gifts would be spent soon after they are received, we estimate the net change in direct spending would be negligible.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS:

The Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 establishes budget-reporting and enforcement procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or revenues. CBO estimates that enacting S. 171 would increase revenues by an insignificant amount and would have an insignificant effect on direct spending.

INCREASE IN LONG-TERM DIRECT SPENDING AND DEFICITS

CBO estimates that enacting S. 171 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

S. 171 would impose intergovernmental and private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA, but CBO estimates that the costs of those mandates would fall below the annual thresholds established in UMRA (\$78 million and \$156 million in 2017, respectively, adjusted annually for inflation).

Mandates that Apply to Public and Private Entities

The bill could increase the costs of complying with existing mandates by making personnel in the NOAA commissioned officer corps eligible for protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Protections under that act require public and private employers to grant various allowances to members of the uniformed services. Because the increase in the number of service members covered by USERRA would be so small (fewer than 400), CBO expects that the incremental cost of compliance also would be small.

Mandates that Apply to Public Entities Only

The bill would exempt NOAA officers from an obligation to serve on juries if the service unreasonably conflicts with official duties or would adversely affect the readiness of a unit, command, or activity. By expanding this exemption to NOAA officers, the bill would preempt some state and local laws governing jury duty; however, that preemption would impose no duty on state or local governments that would result in additional spending or loss of revenues.

Mandates that Apply to Private Entities Only

The bill would prohibit individuals from wearing the uniform of the NOAA commission officer corps without authorization. CBO expects that the prohibition would affect few individuals. Consequently, the cost of the mandate would be negligible.

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