

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1817

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish in the Department of Transportation a drone infrastructure inspection grant program and a drone education and training grant program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 6, 2023

Ms. ROSEN (for herself, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish in the Department of Transportation a drone infrastructure inspection grant program and a drone education and training grant program, 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 “Drone Infrastructure
5 Inspection Grant Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DRONE INFRASTRUCTURE INSPECTION GRANT**
2 **PROGRAM.**

3 (a) **AUTHORITY.**—The Secretary of Transportation
4 shall establish a drone infrastructure inspection grant pro-
5 gram to make grants to governmental entities to facilitate
6 the use of eligible small unmanned aircraft systems to in-
7 crease efficiency, reduce costs, improve worker and com-
8 munity safety, reduce carbon emissions, or meet other pri-
9 orities (as determined by the Secretary) related to critical
10 infrastructure projects.

11 (b) **USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.**—A governmental enti-
12 ty may use a grant provided under this section to—

13 (1) purchase or lease eligible small unmanned
14 aircraft systems;

15 (2) support operational capabilities of eligible
16 small unmanned aircraft systems by the govern-
17 mental entity;

18 (3) contract for services performed with an eli-
19 gible small unmanned aircraft system in cir-
20 cumstances in which the governmental entity does
21 not have the resources or expertise to safely carry
22 out or assist in carrying out the activities described
23 under subsection (a); and

24 (4) support the program management capability
25 of the governmental entity to use an eligible small
26 unmanned aircraft system.

1 (c) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
2 under this section, a governmental entity shall submit an
3 application to the Secretary at such time, in such form,
4 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
5 quire, including an assurance that the governmental entity
6 or its contractor will comply with relevant Federal regula-
7 tions.

8 (d) SELECTION OF APPLICANTS.—In selecting an ap-
9 plicant for a grant under this section, the Secretary shall
10 prioritize projects that propose to—

11 (1) carry out a critical infrastructure project in
12 a historically disadvantaged community; or

13 (2) address a safety risk in the inspection, oper-
14 ation, maintenance, repair, modernization, or con-
15 struction of an element of critical infrastructure.

16 (e) LIMITATION.—Nothing in this section shall be
17 construed as to interfere with an agreement between a
18 governmental entity and a labor union.

19 (f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year
20 after the first grant is provided under this section, the
21 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Commerce,
22 Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Com-
23 mittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House
24 of Representatives a report that evaluates the program
25 carried out under this section, including—

1 (1) a description of the number of grants
2 awarded;

3 (2) the amount of each grant;

4 (3) the activities funded under this section; and

5 (4) the effectiveness of such funded activities in
6 meeting the objectives described in subsection (a).

7 (g) FUNDING.—

8 (1) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of
9 the cost of a project carried out using a grant under
10 this section shall not be less than 80 percent of the
11 total project cost.

12 (2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
13 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
14 this section—

15 (A) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2024; and

16 (B) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.

17 **SEC. 3. DRONE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING**
18 **GRANT PROGRAM.**

19 (a) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Transportation
20 shall establish a drone education and training grant pro-
21 gram to make grants to educational institutions for work-
22 force training for eligible small unmanned aircraft system
23 technology.

24 (b) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—Amounts from a
25 grant under this section shall be used in furtherance of

1 activities authorized under sections 631 and 632 of the
2 FAA Reauthorization Act 2018 (49 U.S.C. 40101 note).

3 (c) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
4 under this section, an educational institution shall submit
5 an application to the Secretary at such time, in such form,
6 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
7 quire.

8 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
9 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this sec-
10 tion—

11 (1) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2024; and

12 (2) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.

13 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

14 In this Act:

15 (1) COVERED FOREIGN ENTITY.—The term
16 “covered foreign entity” means an entity—

17 (A) included on the Consolidated Screening
18 List or Entity List as designated by the Sec-
19 retary of Commerce;

20 (B) domiciled in the People’s Republic of
21 China or the Russian Federation;

22 (C) subject to influence or control by the
23 Government of the People’s Republic of China
24 or by the Russian Federation; or

1 (D) is a subsidiary or affiliate of an entity
2 described in subparagraphs (A) through (C).

3 (2) CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term
4 “critical infrastructure” has the meaning given such
5 term in section 1016(e) of the Critical Infrastruc-
6 tures Protection Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e)).

7 (3) CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT.—
8 The term “critical infrastructure project” means a
9 project for the inspection, operation, maintenance,
10 repair, modernization, or construction of an element
11 of critical infrastructure, including mitigating envi-
12 ronmental hazards to such infrastructure.

13 (4) EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.—The term
14 “educational institution” means an institution of
15 higher education (as defined in section 101 of the
16 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001))
17 that participates in a program authorized under sec-
18 tions 631 and 632 of the FAA Reauthorization Act
19 of 2018 (49 U.S.C. 40101 note).

20 (5) ELEMENT OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUC-
21 TURE.—The term “element of critical infrastruc-
22 ture” means a critical infrastructure facility or
23 asset, including public bridges, tunnels, roads, high-
24 ways, dams, electric grid, water infrastructure, com-

1 munication systems, pipelines, or other related facili-
2 ties or assets, as defined by the Secretary.

3 (6) ELIGIBLE SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT
4 SYSTEM.—The term “eligible small unmanned air-
5 craft system” means a small unmanned aircraft sys-
6 tem manufactured or assembled by a company that
7 is domiciled in the United States and is not a cov-
8 ered foreign entity.

9 (7) GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY.—The term “gov-
10 ernmental entity” means—

11 (A) a State, the District of Columbia, the
12 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a territory of
13 the United States, or a political subdivision
14 thereof;

15 (B) a unit of local government;

16 (C) a Tribal government;

17 (D) a metropolitan planning organization;

18 or

19 (E) a combination of the entities described
20 in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

21 (8) SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT; UNMANNED
22 AIRCRAFT; UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM.—The
23 terms “small unmanned aircraft”, “unmanned air-
24 craft”, and “unmanned aircraft system” have the

1 meanings given such terms in section 44801 of title
2 49, United States Code.

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