

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To require periodic updates to the comprehensive strategy to promote Internet freedom and access to information in Iran, to authorize grants to support and develop programs in Iran that promote or expand an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CARDIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require periodic updates to the comprehensive strategy to promote Internet freedom and access to information in Iran, to authorize grants to support and develop programs in Iran that promote or expand an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet, 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 “Iran Internet Freedom
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. UPDATES TO COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO PRO-**
2 **MOTE INTERNET FREEDOM AND ACCESS TO**
3 **INFORMATION IN IRAN.**

4 (a) UPDATES.—Section 414 of the Iran Threat Re-
5 duction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C.
6 8754) is amended—

7 (1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by
8 striking “Not later than” and inserting the fol-
9 lowing:

10 “(a) INITIAL STRATEGY.—Not later than”;

11 (2) in subsection (a), as redesignated—

12 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (11) and
13 (12) as paragraphs (14) and (15), respectively;
14 and

15 (B) by inserting after paragraph (10) the
16 following:

17 “(11) evaluate the use of virtual private net-
18 works by civil society and human rights activists in
19 Iran and develop strategies for increasing the acces-
20 sibility to such networks;

21 “(12) develop guidance for the Department of
22 the Treasury to ensure that enforcement of sanc-
23 tions does not prevent companies from providing
24 Iranian civilians with the technology and other tools
25 necessary to access the open Internet;

1 “(13) assess the ability of the Iranian regime to
2 cut off all access to the Internet and develop a strat-
3 egy to circumvent Internet blackouts for Iranian
4 civil society;” and

5 (3) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(b) MANDATORY UPDATE.—Not later than 120
7 days after the date of the enactment of the Iran Internet
8 Freedom Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with
9 the Secretary of the Treasury and the heads of other Fed-
10 eral agencies, as appropriate, shall—

11 “(1) review and update the strategy to more ef-
12 fectively address the objectives described in sub-
13 section (a); and

14 “(2) submit the updated strategy to the appro-
15 priate congressional committees.

16 “(c) PERIODIC REVIEWS; UPDATES.—The Secretary
17 of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Treasury,
18 and the heads of other Federal agencies, as appropriate,
19 shall—

20 “(1) periodically review the strategy submitted
21 pursuant to subsection (a); and

22 “(2) whenever such review reveals the need to
23 modify such strategy to more effectively address the
24 objectives described in subsection (a), submit an up-

1 dated strategy to the appropriate congressional com-
2 mittees.

3 “(d) FORM.—Each strategy required under this sec-
4 tion shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may in-
5 clude a classified annex.”.

6 **SEC. 3. PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORT TO CIRCUMVENT**
7 **IRANIAN INTERNET CENSORSHIP.**

8 (a) GRANTS TO SUPPORT INTERNET FREEDOM
9 TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS IN IRAN.—The Secretary of
10 State, in consultation with the Administrator of the
11 United States Agency for International Development and
12 the President of the Open Technology Fund, as appro-
13 priate, may award grants and contracts to private organi-
14 zations to support and develop programs in Iran that pro-
15 mote or expand—

16 (1) an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure
17 Internet; and

18 (2) the online exercise of human rights and fun-
19 damental freedoms of individual citizens, activists,
20 human rights defenders, independent journalists,
21 civil society organizations, and marginalized popu-
22 lations in Iran.

23 (b) GOALS.—The goals of the programs developed
24 with grants authorized under subsection (a) should be—

1 (1) to support unrestricted access to the Inter-
2 net in Iran;

3 (2) to increase the availability of internet free-
4 dom tools in Iran;

5 (3) to scale up the distribution of such tech-
6 nologies and tools throughout Iran;

7 (4) to conduct research on repressive tactics
8 that undermine internet freedom in Iran;

9 (5) to ensure information on digital safety is
10 available to human rights defenders, independent
11 journalists, civil society organizations, and
12 marginalized populations in Iran; and

13 (6) to engage private industry, including e-com-
14 merce firms and social networking companies, re-
15 garding the importance of preserving unrestricted
16 Internet access in Iran.

17 (c) GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Grants authorized under
18 this section shall be distributed to multiple vendors and
19 suppliers through an open, fair, competitive, and evidence-
20 based decision process—

21 (1) to diversify the technical base; and

22 (2) to reduce the risk of misuse by bad actors.

23 (d) SECURITY AUDITS.—New technologies developed
24 using grants authorized under this section shall undergo
25 comprehensive security audits to ensure that such tech-

1 nologies are secure and have not been compromised in a
2 manner detrimental to—

3 (1) the interests of the United States; or

4 (2) individuals or organizations benefitting from
5 programs supported by such funding.

6 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
8 appropriated to the Open Technology Fund, in addi-
9 tion to the amount appropriated for the Open Tech-
10 nology Fund pursuant to section 1299P(d) of the
11 William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Au-
12 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law
13 116–283), \$15,000,000 for each of the fiscal years
14 2025 and 2026 to carry out the grant program au-
15 thorized under this section.

16 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pur-
17 suant to paragraph (1) shall remain available until
18 expended.