

HR 4490

United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014

Congress: 113 (2013–2015, Ended)

Chamber: House

Policy Area: International Affairs

Introduced: Apr 28, 2014

Current Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Latest Action: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. (Jul 29, 2014)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4490>

Sponsor

Name: Rep. Royce, Edward R. [R-CA-39]

Party: Republican • **State:** CA • **Chamber:** House

Cosponsors (15 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Rep. Chabot, Steve [R-OH-1]	R · OH		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Connolly, Gerald E. [D-VA-11]	D · VA		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Engel, Eliot L. [D-NY-16]	D · NY		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Keating, William R. [D-MA-9]	D · MA		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Rohrabacher, Dana [R-CA-48]	R · CA		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana [R-FL-27]	R · FL		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Salmon, Matt [R-AZ-5]	R · AZ		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Sherman, Brad [D-CA-30]	D · CA		Apr 28, 2014
Rep. Deutch, Theodore E. [D-FL-21]	D · FL		Apr 29, 2014
Rep. McCaul, Michael T. [R-TX-10]	R · TX		Apr 29, 2014
Rep. Poe, Ted [R-TX-2]	R · TX		Apr 29, 2014
Rep. Sires, Albio [D-NJ-8]	D · NJ		Apr 29, 2014
Rep. Lowenthal, Alan S. [D-CA-47]	D · CA		Apr 30, 2014
Rep. Stockman, Steve [R-TX-36]	R · TX		Apr 30, 2014
Rep. Jones, Walter B., Jr. [R-NC-3]	R · NC		Jul 9, 2014

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Foreign Affairs Committee	House	Reported By	Jul 18, 2014
Foreign Relations Committee	Senate	Referred To	Jul 29, 2014

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

International Affairs

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014 - Revises U.S. international broadcasting and communications structures, missions, and objectives.

(Sec. 5) Requires U.S. international broadcasting to incorporate specified standards.

(Sec. 6) Directs the Board of the United States International Communications Agency and the Board of the Freedom News Network, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall ensure that United States international broadcasting is conducted only to countries and regions that:

- lack democratic rule;
- lack the legal and political environment that allows media organizations and journalists to operate free from government-led or permitted harassment and from economic impediments to news and related programming and content;
- lack established, domestic, and widely accessible media that provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive news; and
- would benefit U.S. national security and related interests, and the safety and security of U.S. citizens at home and abroad.

Title I: Establishment, Organization, and Management of the United States International Communications Agency - Subtitle A: Establishment of the United States International Communications Agency - (Sec. 101) Establishes the United States International Communications Agency (USICA), consisting of the Voice of America and the offices of the International Broadcasting Bureau. and

(Sec. 102) Establishes the USICA Board and the Chief Executive Officer and their authorities and duties.

(Sec. 108) Prescribes requirements for: (1) enhanced coordination among USICA, the Freedom News Network established under title II, and the Department of State; (2) USICA grants to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Incorporated, Radio Free Asia, or the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Incorporated; and (3) specified USICA personnel and compensation limitations.

Subtitle B: The Voice of America - (Sec. 121) Expresses the sense of Congress that the Voice of America (VOA): (1) has been an indispensable element of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy efforts and should remain the flagship brand of the Agency, and (2) would benefit from a recalibration of federal international broadcasting agencies and resources which would provide it with greater mission focus and flexibility.

(Sec. 122) Requires VOA to adhere to specified principles and carry out specified duties and responsibilities.

(Sec. 124) Requires Radio Marti and Television Marti, which constitute the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, to: (1) continue programming and content production consistent with their mission and activities under the Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act and the Television Broadcasting to Cuba Act, and (2) continue to exist within VOA.

(Sec. 125) Establishes the office of the VOA Director and specifies the Director's duties and responsibilities.

Subtitle C: General Provisions - (Sec. 131) Requires the USICA Board and the Freedom News Network (FNN) to conduct periodic, unclassified consultations with the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) in order to

assess international developments, including :

- progress toward democratization, the development of free and independent media outlets, and the free flow of information in countries that receive USICA and FNN programming and content; and
- foreign languages that have increased or decreased in strategic importance.

(Sec. 132) Requires federal agency heads, upon a formal request from the Chair of the USICA Board, to assist and coordinate with USICA to facilitate a temporary broadcasting surge or enhance transmission capacity for such a surge for USICA, FNN, or both.

(Sec. 133) Makes it USICA policy to give FNN the right of first refusal for acquisition of any radio or television broadcast transmission facilities or equipment USICA disposes of.

(Sec. 134) Repeals the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994.

Title II: The Freedom News Network - (Sec. 201) Expresses the sense of Congress that RFE/RL, Incorporated, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Incorporated share a common mission with distinct geographic foci, and should therefore be merged into a single organization with distinct marketing brands to provide news and related programming and content in countries where free media are not established.

Subtitle A: Consolidation of Existing Grantee Organizations - (Sec. 211) Consolidates RFE/RL Incorporated, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Incorporated into the (non-federal) Freedom News Network (FNN) to carry out all international broadcasting activities supported by the U.S. government. Retains the brand names of the individual grantees.

(Sec. 212) Requires FNN to:

- provide uncensored local and regional news and analysis to people in societies where a robust, indigenous, independent, and free media does not exist;
- strengthen civil societies by promoting democratic values and promoting equality and the rights;
- help countries improve their indigenous capacity to enhance media professionalism and independence, and develop partnerships with local media outlets; and
- promote access to uncensored sources of information, especially via the internet, and use all effective and efficient mediums of communication to reach target audiences.

(Sec. 213) Specifies FNN standards and principles, including consistency with broad U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Subtitle B: Organization of the Freedom News Network - (Sec. 221) Prescribes requirements for an FNN Board and Chief Executive Officer, the annual budget, and assistance from federal agencies and instrumentalities.

(Sec. 225) Makes conforming amendments to the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948.

Title III: Miscellaneous Provisions - (Sec. 301) Directs the USICA and FNN Chief Executive Officers each to establish procedures to vet and monitor employees for affiliations to terrorist organizations, foreign governments, or agents of foreign governments to protect against espionage, sabotage, foreign propaganda messaging, and other subversive activities that undermine U.S. national security objectives.

(Sec. 302) Requires any funds appropriated for broadcasting subject to USICA supervision to be authorized first and not to exceed authorized levels.

Actions Timeline

- **Jul 29, 2014:** Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.
- **Jul 28, 2014:** Mr. Royce moved to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.
- **Jul 28, 2014:** Considered under suspension of the rules. (consideration: CR H6886-6895)
- **Jul 28, 2014:** DEBATE - The House proceeded with forty minutes of debate on H.R. 4490.
- **Jul 28, 2014:** Passed/agreed to in House: On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote.(text: CR H6886-6893)
- **Jul 28, 2014:** On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote. (text: CR H6886-6893)
- **Jul 28, 2014:** Motion to reconsider laid on the table Agreed to without objection.
- **Jul 18, 2014:** Reported (Amended) by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. H. Rept. 113-541.
- **Jul 18, 2014:** Placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 407.
- **Apr 30, 2014:** Committee Consideration and Mark-up Session Held.
- **Apr 30, 2014:** Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Unanimous Consent.
- **Apr 28, 2014:** Introduced in House
- **Apr 28, 2014:** Referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.