

AMENDMENT NO. _____ Calendar No. _____

Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—119th Cong., 2d Sess.

S. 3900

To promote human rights, internet freedom and
accountability in Iran, and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on _____ and
ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE intended
to be proposed by Mr. MCCORMICK

Viz:

1 Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the fol-

2 lowing:

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Iran Human Rights,

5 Internet Freedom, and Accountability Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-

8 ings:

9 (1) For nearly five decades, the people of Iran

10 have endured brutal repression under the Govern-

11 ment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a regime that

1 denies basic human rights, silences dissidents, and
2 responds to peaceful protest with violence.

3 (2) The people of Iran have repeatedly and cou-
4 rageously taken to the streets to demand economic
5 opportunity, human rights, dignity, and freedom.

6 (3) During the 2026 protests, the Government
7 of the Islamic Republic of Iran responded with bru-
8 tality by reportedly killing tens of thousands of peo-
9 ple and wounding thousands more, arresting tens of
10 thousands, and restricting internet access and tele-
11 phone lines.

12 (4) The people of Iran are protesting the Ira-
13 nian regime's economic mismanagement, corruption,
14 internal suppression, and unjust executions.

15 (5) Free expression, open information, and un-
16 censored communication are fundamental human
17 rights and critical to the survival of the Iranian
18 protestors.

19 (6) Thanks in part to United States-funded ef-
20 forts to support human rights and open internet ac-
21 cess, the Iranian people are consistently found to be
22 one of the most pro-American populations in the
23 Middle East.

24 (7) The inspiring 2022 Women, Life, Freedom
25 protests demanded an end to the Islamic Republic

1 and its violence, particularly against Iranian women
2 and ethnic minorities.

3 (8) The barbaric so-called “morality police” and
4 other arms of state suppression have a lengthy his-
5 tory of repressing the Iranian people’s fundamental
6 freedoms.

7 (9) The Iranian regime has engaged in system-
8 atic efforts to intimidate, harass, detain, and harm
9 political dissidents, activists, and journalists both
10 within Iran and beyond its borders.

11 (10) The people of Iran deserve the right to
12 dignity, democracy, and self-determination and to be
13 free from the brutality of the Government of the Is-
14 lamic Republic of Iran.

15 (b) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It shall be the policy
16 of the United States—

17 (1) to recognize the Iranian people’s right to
18 self-determination;

19 (2) to facilitate the immediate expansion of
20 open, uncensored internet access and civilian lines of
21 communication for the people of Iran to commu-
22 nicate domestically and with the outside world;

23 (3) to support the internationally recognized
24 human rights of Iranians and programs to assist
25 Iranian civil society, including in their credible docu-

1 mentation, reporting, and accountability efforts of
2 abuses in Iran;

3 (4) to fully enforce sanctions against regime
4 violators of internationally recognized human rights
5 and their family members, including any family
6 members and associates in the United States that
7 continue to directly or indirectly provide support to
8 the regime; and

9 (5) to work in coordination with its allies and
10 partners to deter the regime's violence against the
11 Iranian people.

12 **SEC. 3. IMPROVED COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO PRO-**
13 **MOTE INTERNET FREEDOM IN IRAN.**

14 (a) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.—The
15 Secretary of State is authorized to be the Federal official
16 with the primary responsibility for—

17 (1) promoting widespread internet freedom in
18 Iran and expanding open access to independent and
19 impartial information for Iranian citizens;

20 (2) coordinating all efforts carried out by Fed-
21 eral departments and agencies that relate the objec-
22 tives outlined in paragraph (1); and

23 (3) serving as the principal official responsible
24 for updating and carrying out the strategy required
25 under section 5124(a) of the National Defense Au-

1 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22 U.S.C.
2 8754a).

3 (b) UPDATES TO COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO
4 PROMOTE INTERNET FREEDOM AND ACCESS TO INFOR-
5 MATION IN IRAN.—

6 (1) UPDATES.—Section 5124 of the National
7 Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22
8 U.S.C. 8754a) is amended—

9 (A) in subsection (a)(2), by striking sub-
10 paragraphs (A) through (G) and inserting the
11 following new subparagraphs:

12 “(A) An evaluation of the use of virtual
13 private networks, centralized networks, peer-to-
14 peer technologies, and other emerging cir-
15 cumvention tools by civil society and inter-
16 nationally recognized human rights activists in
17 Iran and strategies for increasing open access
18 to such networks and technologies, prioritizing
19 tools with demonstrated effectiveness,
20 scalability, and acceptable user security risks in
21 the Iran context.

22 “(B) An assessment of United States Gov-
23 ernment efforts to cultivate and expand viable
24 alternatives to virtual private networks, peer to

1 peer technology, and other emerging circumven-
2 tion tools.

3 “(C) A breakdown of any limitations or re-
4 strictions facing the development or deployment
5 of United States Government sponsored virtual
6 private networks, peer to peer technology, or
7 other emerging circumvention tools to support
8 internet freedom in Iran.

9 “(D) An assessment of the ability of the
10 Government of Iran to cut off all access to the
11 global internet in Iran, including the primary
12 tools and technology through which they may be
13 able to do so.”;

14 (B) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
15 section (c); and

16 (C) by inserting after subsection (a) the
17 following new subsection:

18 “(b) UPDATES.—The Secretary of State and the
19 heads of other Federal departments and agencies as ap-
20 propriate, shall review the strategy under subsection (a)
21 on an ongoing basis and update the strategy as appro-
22 priate, taking into account the results of such review.”.

23 (2) SUBMISSION OF FIRST UPDATES.—

1 (A) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 120
2 days after the date of the enactment of this
3 Act, the Secretary of State shall—

4 (i) review and update the strategy
5 pursuant to section 5124(a) of the Na-
6 tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal
7 Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a), as amended
8 by paragraph (1); and

9 (ii) submit such updated strategy to
10 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
11 Senate and the Committee on Foreign Af-
12 fairs of the House of Representatives.

13 (B) FORM.—The strategy under subpara-
14 graph (A) shall be submitted in an unclassified
15 form, but may include a classified annex.

16 **SEC. 4. INTERNET FREEDOM AND CENSORSHIP CIR-**
17 **CUMVENTION.**

18 (a) INTERNET FREEDOM REPORT.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days
20 after the date of the enactment of the Act, the Sec-
21 retary of State, in consultation with the Federal
22 Communications Commission and the Department of
23 the Treasury, shall prepare and submit to the Com-
24 mittee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the
25 Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Rep-

1 representatives a report that updates and supplements
2 the report required under section 5124 of the Na-
3 tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year
4 2025 (Public Law 118–159).

5 (2) ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—
6 Updates to the strategy required in section 5124 of
7 the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal
8 Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a) shall also include the
9 following:

10 (A) An assessment of the feasibility of
11 using direct-to-cell wireless communications
12 technologies to expand internet access for the
13 people of Iran, including technical, regulatory,
14 and security considerations.

15 (B) An analysis of how drone-based plat-
16 forms, signal-jamming technologies, and related
17 countermeasures could impact the feasibility,
18 security, economics, and resilience of such di-
19 rect-to-cell wireless communications.

20 (C) A survey of terrestrial and non-terres-
21 trial telecommunications service providers cur-
22 rently active in Iran, including—

23 (i) whether such providers are state-
24 owned or state-controlled;

1 (ii) the extent of foreign participation
2 or investment in such providers;

3 (iii) the implications of such owner-
4 ship and control for communications free-
5 dom and censorship; and

6 (iv) any other relevant information to
7 assess the opportunities and risks associ-
8 ated with terrestrial and non-terrestrial
9 communications technologies in Iran.

10 (3) FORM.—The report required by paragraph
11 (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may
12 include a classified annex.

13 (b) EXTENSION AND INCREASE OF AUTHORIZATION
14 FOR IRAN INTERNET FREEDOM GRANT PROGRAM.—Sec-
15 tion 5124(c)(5)(A) of the National Defense Authorization
16 Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a(c)(5)(A)), as
17 redesignated by section 3(b)(1)(B), is amended by striking
18 “2025 and 2026” and inserting “2030 and 2031”.

19 (c) DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNET ACCESS TECH-
20 NOLOGIES.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Department of State, in
22 coordination with the Department of Defense and
23 other relevant Federal departments and agencies, is
24 authorized to utilize existing interagency coordina-
25 tion mechanisms to the maximum extent practicable,

1 to support the development of low-cost, easily scal-
2 able, and rapidly deployable technologies to counter
3 internet shutdowns or limitations on network access
4 in Iran to enable populations to overcome such re-
5 strictions.

6 (2) OBJECTIVES.—In carrying out the respon-
7 sibilities under subsection (a), the Department
8 should prioritize the following objectives:

9 (A) Identifying and supporting the devel-
10 opment of technologies capable of overcoming
11 internet blackouts and network disruptions im-
12 posed by the Government of the Islamic Repub-
13 lic of Iran and facilitating open, uncensored
14 internet and network access, which could in-
15 clude, among other things—

16 (i) mesh networking solutions; and
17 (ii) portable and deployable commu-
18 nication systems.

19 (B) Expanding access to and the effective-
20 ness virtual private networks (commonly known
21 as “VPNs”), including by—

22 (i) collaborating with industry, aca-
23 demia, and relevant stakeholders to accel-
24 erate the research, development, and de-
25 ployment of such technologies;

1 (ii) conducting pilot programs and
2 field experiments to test the effectiveness
3 and scalability of developed solutions in
4 real-world settings; and

5 (iii) providing technical assistance and
6 resources to partner organizations, govern-
7 ments, and nongovernmental entities en-
8 gaged in efforts to expand uncensored
9 internet access.

10 (C) Identifying and evaluating off-the-shelf
11 technologies that could be rapidly procured and
12 deployed to address internet access challenges
13 in targeted regions.

14 (D) Ensuring that any technology sup-
15 ported under this subsection is assessed for
16 user safety, detectability by hostile govern-
17 ments, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, data pro-
18 tection, supply-chain risks, sanctions and ex-
19 port-control compliance, and risk of diversion to
20 the Government of Iran, the Islamic Revolu-
21 tionary Guard Corps, or sanctioned persons or
22 entities.

23 (3) COLLABORATION.—The Department should
24 collaborate with relevant Federal agencies to lever-
25 age expertise in acquisition processes and practices

1 related to carrying out the objectives under para-
2 graph (2) with the aim of—

3 (A) integrating best practices in acquisi-
4 tion into the research, development, and deploy-
5 ment processes of technologies to facilitate
6 open, uncensored internet access;

7 (B) providing training and educational op-
8 portunities on acquisition principles, regula-
9 tions, and procedures, with a focus on tech-
10 nology development for countering censorship
11 and related restrictions;

12 (C) fostering dialogue and exchange of
13 knowledge between acquisition professionals and
14 innovation specialists to enhance the effective-
15 ness and efficiency of acquisition related to
16 internet access technologies;

17 (D) collaborating on the development of
18 acquisition strategies that prioritize the rapid
19 acquisition and deployment of technologies
20 aimed at countering censorship and restrictions
21 on internet access; and

22 (E) ensuring that strategies aimed at the
23 rapid acquisition and deployment of such tech-
24 nologies account for the specific challenges pre-
25 sented by the country context, including

1 logistical barriers to large-scale technology dis-
2 tribution and security risks to civilians using
3 the technologies.

4 (4) REPORTING.—The Secretary of State shall
5 submit to the appropriate congressional committees
6 an annual report detailing the progress, challenges,
7 and outcomes of the efforts undertaken pursuant to
8 this section.

9 (5) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
10 TEES DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term “ap-
11 propriate congressional committees” means—

12 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations,
13 the Committee on Armed Services, and the
14 Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;
15 and

16 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
17 Committee on Armed Services, and the Com-
18 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
19 resentatives.

20 **SEC. 5. STRATEGY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ASSISTANCE.**

21 (a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days
23 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
24 retary of State shall submit to the appropriate con-
25 gressional committees a strategy to expand and en-

1 hance United States programs to support the protec-
2 tion and promotion of internationally recognized
3 human rights in Iran.

4 (2) ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY.—The strat-
5 egy required under subsection (a) shall include—

6 (A) United States Government efforts to
7 support internationally recognized human rights
8 and democratic civil society, including efforts to
9 assist in the credible documentation of abuses
10 of internationally recognized human rights;

11 (B) specific plans and initiatives to ensure
12 the Iranian people have reliable access to accu-
13 rate, uncensored, and unbiased news coverage,
14 including through digital circumvention tools,
15 shortwave radio, and emerging technologies;

16 (C) programs to support independent Ira-
17 nian journalists, media outlets, and citizen jour-
18 nalists, including grants for equipment, train-
19 ing, secure communication platforms, and ca-
20 pacity-building for Persian and other local lan-
21 guage media;

22 (D) programs to support and train Iranian
23 civil society;

24 (E) coordination mechanisms with inter-
25 national partners, the private sector, and dias-

1 pora communities to amplify credible inde-
2 pendent media;

3 (F) annual performance metrics and
4 benchmarks for audience reach, content impact,
5 and program outcomes; and

6 (G) a multi-year budget and resource re-
7 quirements plan to implement the strategy.

8 (3) FORM.—The strategy required in subsection
9 (a) shall be transmitted in an unclassified form and
10 may contain a classified annex.

11 (b) GAO REPORT ON NEAR EAST REGIONAL DEMOC-
12 RACY (NERD) EXPENDITURES.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
14 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
15 Comptroller General of the United States shall sub-
16 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a
17 report examining Federal expenditures under the
18 Near East Regional Democracy (NERD) account
19 over fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

20 (2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The report shall in-
21 clude—

22 (A) a detailed accounting of all NERD
23 funds obligated and expended for Iran-related
24 programs, including broadcasting, media sup-

1 port, civil society assistance, and human rights
2 initiatives;

3 (B) an assessment of the processes used
4 for grant allocation, contractor oversight, vet-
5 ting of recipients, and measuring program out-
6 comes;

7 (C) an evaluation of the effectiveness of
8 such programs in advancing United States pol-
9 icy objectives, including expanding information
10 access and supporting independent media with-
11 in Iran; and

12 (D) recommendations for improving trans-
13 parency, accountability, and impact measure-
14 ment.

15 (3) PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMA-
16 TION.—The Comptroller General of the United
17 States shall ensure that the report required under
18 this subsection does not publicly disclose personally
19 identifiable information, implementing-partner iden-
20 tities, sub-grantee identities, operational details, cy-
21 bersecurity methods, secure communications chan-
22 nels, or other information that the Secretary of
23 State determines could endanger individuals, com-
24 promise ongoing programs, or undermine the na-
25 tional security interests of the United States. Such

1 information may be provided in a classified annex or
2 otherwise protected consistent with applicable law.

3 (c) FORM.—The strategy and the GAO report re-
4 quired under this section shall each be submitted in un-
5 classified form, but may include a classified annex.

6 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
7 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
8 gressional committees” means—

9 (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the
10 Committee on Armed Services, the Select Committee
11 on Intelligence, and the Committee on Appropria-
12 tions of the Senate; and

13 (2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
14 Committee on Armed Services, the Permanent Select
15 Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on
16 Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

17 **SEC. 6. CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN**
18 **IRAN.**

19 (a) TRAINING AND TOOLS.—Not later than 180 days
20 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
21 of State should establish programs—

22 (1) to deliver remote or in-person cybersecurity
23 training to journalists, defenders of internationally
24 recognized human rights, and civil-society actors in
25 Iran;

1 (2) to furnish vetted open-source or commer-
2 cially available digital-safety tools, including
3 prioritizing VPN services and other software-based
4 solutions that minimize physical detection risks, in-
5 cluding end-to-end encrypted messaging applications;
6 and

7 (3) to provide multilingual educational mate-
8 rials that warn Iranian users about regime-con-
9 trolled applications and phishing campaigns.

10 (b) REPORTING AND EVALUATION.—

11 (1) METRICS.—The Secretary of State shall
12 track and make available to the Committee on For-
13 eign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on
14 Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, in
15 classified form or otherwise protected form as appro-
16 priate, aggregate metrics on the number of trainees,
17 incident-response cases, and unique users of sup-
18 ported digital safety tools. Such metrics shall be ag-
19 gregated and reported biannually in a manner that
20 protects user safety, operational security, imple-
21 menting partners and the integrity of supported
22 tools and platforms.

23 (2) INDEPENDENT EVALUATION.—Not later
24 than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this
25 Act, the Comptroller General of the United States

1 shall submit to the appropriate congressional com-
2 mittees an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pro-
3 gram carried out under this section.

4 (c) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section may
5 be construed to supersede or limit existing authority under
6 section 404 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria
7 Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8754) or any other
8 provision of law related to internet freedom programming
9 in Iran.

10 (d) COORDINATION WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS.—In
11 carrying out this section, the Secretary of State shall co-
12 ordinate with and build upon existing Iran internet free-
13 dom programs, including those established under section
14 5124 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal
15 Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a), to avoid duplication and
16 maximize effectiveness.

17 **SEC. 7. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

18 Nothing in this Act may be construed as authorizing
19 the use of military force.

20 **SEC. 8. SANCTIONS AND EXPORT CONTROL SAVINGS**
21 **CLAUSE.**

22 Nothing in this Act may be construed to authorize
23 any transaction prohibited by the International Emer-
24 gency Economic Powers Act, the Iranian Transactions and
25 Sanctions Regulations, the Export Control Reform Act of

1 2018, the Export Administration Regulations, or any
2 other applicable sanctions or export-control authority, ex-
3 cept pursuant to a general or specific license, regulatory
4 authorization or other authorization issued by the relevant
5 agency.