

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; and

6 (5) to work in coordination with its allies and
7 partners to deter the regime's violence against the
8 Iranian people.

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

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

14 (1) promoting widespread internet freedom in
15 Iran and expanding open access to independent and
16 impartial information for Iranian citizens;

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

20 (3) serving as the principal official responsible
21 for updating and carrying out the strategy required
22 under section 5124(a) of the National Defense Au-
23 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22 U.S.C.
24 8754a).

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

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

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

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

20 “(B) An assessment of United States Gov-
21 ernment efforts to cultivate and expand viable
22 alternatives to virtual private networks, peer to
23 peer technology, and other emerging circumven-
24 tion tools.

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

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

12 (B) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
13 section (c); and

14 (C) by inserting after subsection (a) the
15 following new subsection:

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

21 (2) SUBMISSION OF FIRST UPDATES.—

22 (A) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 120
23 days after the date of the enactment of this
24 Act, the Secretary of State shall—

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

6 (ii) submit such updated strategy to
7 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
8 Senate and the Committee on Foreign Af-
9 fairs of the House of Representatives.

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

13 (3) ADDITIONAL UPDATE.—Section 414 of the
14 Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act
15 of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8754) is amended—

16 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (11) and
17 (12) as paragraphs (12) and (13), respectively;
18 and

19 (B) by inserting after paragraph (10) the
20 following new paragraph:

21 “(11) work with the relevant Federal depart-
22 ments and agencies to ensure enforcement of sanc-
23 tions does not impede companies providing to Ira-
24 nian civilians the technology and other tools nec-
25 essary to access the open internet;”.

1 **SEC. 4. INTERNET FREEDOM AND CENSORSHIP CIR-**
2 **CUMVENTION.**

3 (a) INTERNET FREEDOM REPORT.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days
5 after the date of the enactment of the Act, the Sec-
6 retary of State, in consultation with the Federal
7 Communications Commission and the Department of
8 the Treasury, shall prepare and submit to the Com-
9 mittee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the
10 Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Rep-
11 resentatives a report that updates and supplements
12 the report required under section 5124 of the Na-
13 tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year
14 2025 (Public Law 118–159).

15 (2) ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—
16 Updates to the strategy required in section 5124 of
17 the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal
18 Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a) shall also include the
19 following:

20 (A) An assessment of the feasibility of
21 using direct-to-cell wireless communications
22 technologies to expand internet access for the
23 people of Iran, including technical, regulatory,
24 and security considerations.

25 (B) An analysis of how drone-based plat-
26 forms, signal-jamming technologies, and related

1 countermeasures could impact the feasibility,
2 security, economics, and resilience of such di-
3 rect-to-cell wireless communications.

4 (C) A survey of terrestrial and non-terres-
5 trial telecommunications service providers cur-
6 rently active in Iran, including—

7 (i) whether such providers are state-
8 owned or state-controlled;

9 (ii) the extent of foreign participation
10 or investment in such providers;

11 (iii) the implications of such owner-
12 ship and control for communications free-
13 dom and censorship; and

14 (iv) any other relevant information to
15 assess the opportunities and risks associ-
16 ated with terrestrial and non-terrestrial
17 communications technologies in Iran.

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

21 (b) EXTENSION AND INCREASE OF AUTHORIZATION
22 FOR IRAN INTERNET FREEDOM GRANT PROGRAM.—Sec-
23 tion 5124(c)(5)(A) of the National Defense Authorization
24 Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a(c)(5)(A)), as
25 redesignated by section 3(b)(1)(B), is amended by striking

1 “each of fiscal years 2025 and 2026” and inserting “each
2 fiscal year through fiscal year 2030”.

3 (c) DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNET ACCESS TECH-
4 NOLOGIES.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Department of State, in
6 coordination with the Department of Defense and
7 other relevant Federal departments and agencies, is
8 authorized to utilize existing interagency coordina-
9 tion mechanisms to the maximum extent practicable,
10 to support the development of low-cost, easily scal-
11 able, and rapidly deployable technologies to counter
12 internet shutdowns or limitations on network access
13 in Iran to enable populations to overcome such re-
14 strictions.

15 (2) OBJECTIVES.—In carrying out the respon-
16 sibilities under subsection (a), the Department
17 should prioritize the following objectives:

18 (A) Identifying and supporting the devel-
19 opment of technologies capable of overcoming
20 internet blackouts and network disruptions im-
21 posed by the Government of the Islamic Repub-
22 lic of Iran and facilitating open, uncensored
23 internet and network access, which could in-
24 clude, among other things—

25 (i) mesh networking solutions; and

1 (ii) portable and deployable commu-
2 nication systems.

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

6 (i) collaborating with industry, aca-
7 demia, and relevant stakeholders to accel-
8 erate the research, development, and de-
9 ployment of such technologies;

10 (ii) conducting pilot programs and
11 field experiments to test the effectiveness
12 and scalability of developed solutions in
13 real-world settings; and

14 (iii) providing technical assistance and
15 resources to partner organizations, govern-
16 ments, and nongovernmental entities en-
17 gaged in efforts to expand uncensored
18 internet access.

19 (C) Identifying and evaluating off-the-shelf
20 technologies that could be rapidly procured and
21 deployed to address internet access challenges
22 in targeted regions.

23 (D) Ensuring that any technology sup-
24 ported under this subsection is assessed for
25 user safety, detectability by hostile govern-

1 ments, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, data pro-
2 tection, supply-chain risks, sanctions and ex-
3 port-control compliance, and risk of diversion to
4 the Government of Iran, the Islamic Revolu-
5 tionary Guard Corps, or sanctioned persons or
6 entities.

7 (3) COLLABORATION.—The Department should
8 collaborate with relevant Federal agencies to lever-
9 age expertise in acquisition processes and practices
10 related to carrying out the objectives under para-
11 graph (2) with the aim of—

12 (A) integrating best practices in acquisi-
13 tion into the research, development, and deploy-
14 ment processes of technologies to facilitate
15 open, uncensored internet access;

16 (B) providing training and educational op-
17 portunities on acquisition principles, regula-
18 tions, and procedures, with a focus on tech-
19 nology development for countering censorship
20 and related restrictions;

21 (C) fostering dialogue and exchange of
22 knowledge between acquisition professionals and
23 innovation specialists to enhance the effective-
24 ness and efficiency of acquisition related to
25 internet access technologies;

1 (D) collaborating on the development of
2 acquisition strategies that prioritize the rapid
3 acquisition and deployment of technologies
4 aimed at countering censorship and restrictions
5 on internet access; and

6 (E) ensuring that strategies aimed at the
7 rapid acquisition and deployment of such tech-
8 nologies account for the specific challenges pre-
9 sented by the country context, including
10 logistical barriers to large-scale technology dis-
11 tribution and security risks to civilians using
12 the technologies.

13 (4) REPORTING.—The Secretary of State shall
14 submit to the appropriate congressional committees
15 an annual report detailing the progress, challenges,
16 and outcomes of the efforts undertaken pursuant to
17 this section.

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

21 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations,
22 the Committee on Armed Services, and the
23 Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;
24 and

1 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
2 Committee on Armed Services, and the Com-
3 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
4 resentatives.

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

6 (a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days
8 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
9 retary of State shall submit to the appropriate con-
10 gressional committees a strategy to expand and en-
11 hance United States programs to support the protec-
12 tion and promotion of internationally recognized
13 human rights in Iran.

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

16 (A) United States Government efforts to
17 support internationally recognized human rights
18 and democratic civil society, including efforts to
19 assist in the credible documentation of abuses
20 of internationally recognized human rights;

21 (B) specific plans and initiatives to ensure
22 the Iranian people have reliable access to accu-
23 rate, uncensored, and unbiased news coverage,
24 including through digital circumvention tools,
25 shortwave radio, and emerging technologies;

1 (C) programs to support independent Ira-
2 nian journalists, media outlets, and citizen jour-
3 nalists, including grants for equipment, train-
4 ing, secure communication platforms, and ca-
5 pacity-building for Persian and other local lan-
6 guage media;

7 (D) programs to support and train Iranian
8 civil society;

9 (E) coordination mechanisms with inter-
10 national partners, the private sector, and dias-
11 pora communities to amplify credible inde-
12 pendent media;

13 (F) annual performance metrics and
14 benchmarks for audience reach, content impact,
15 and program outcomes; and

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

18 (3) FORM.—The strategy required in subsection
19 (a) shall be transmitted in an unclassified form and
20 may contain a classified annex.

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

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
24 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
25 Comptroller General of the United States shall sub-

1 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a
2 report examining Federal expenditures under the
3 Near East Regional Democracy (NERD) account
4 over fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

5 (2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The report shall in-
6 clude—

7 (A) a detailed accounting of all NERD
8 funds obligated and expended for Iran-related
9 programs, including broadcasting, media sup-
10 port, civil society assistance, and human rights
11 initiatives;

12 (B) an assessment of the processes used
13 for grant allocation, contractor oversight, vet-
14 ting of recipients, and measuring program out-
15 comes;

16 (C) an evaluation of the effectiveness of
17 such programs in advancing United States pol-
18 icy objectives, including expanding information
19 access and supporting independent media with-
20 in Iran; and

21 (D) recommendations for improving trans-
22 parency, accountability, and impact measure-
23 ment.

24 (3) PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMA-
25 TION.—The Comptroller General of the United

1 States shall ensure that the report required under
2 this subsection does not publicly disclose personally
3 identifiable information, implementing-partner iden-
4 tities, sub-grantee identities, operational details, cy-
5 bersecurity methods, secure communications chan-
6 nels, or other information that the Secretary of
7 State determines could endanger individuals, com-
8 promise ongoing programs, or undermine the na-
9 tional security interests of the United States. Such
10 information may be provided in a classified annex or
11 otherwise protected consistent with applicable law.

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

15 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
16 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
17 gressional committees” means—

18 (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the
19 Committee on Armed Services, the Select Committee
20 on Intelligence, and the Committee on Appropria-
21 tions of the Senate; and

22 (2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the
23 Committee on Armed Services, the Permanent Select
24 Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on
25 Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

1 **SEC. 6. CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN**
2 **IRAN.**

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

6 (1) to deliver remote or in-person cybersecurity
7 training to journalists, defenders of internationally
8 recognized human rights, and civil-society actors in
9 Iran;

10 (2) to furnish vetted open-source or commer-
11 cially available digital-safety tools, including
12 prioritizing VPN services and other software-based
13 solutions that minimize physical detection risks, in-
14 cluding end-to-end encrypted messaging applications;
15 and

16 (3) to provide multilingual educational mate-
17 rials that warn Iranian users about regime-con-
18 trolled applications and phishing campaigns.

19 (b) REPORTING AND EVALUATION.—

20 (1) METRICS.—The Secretary of State shall
21 track and make available to the Committee on For-
22 eign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on
23 Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, in
24 classified form or otherwise protected form as appro-
25 priate, aggregate metrics on the number of trainees,
26 incident-response cases, and unique users of sup-

1 ported digital safety tools. Such metrics shall be ag-
2 gregated and reported biannually in a manner that
3 protects user safety, operational security, imple-
4 menting partners and the integrity of supported
5 tools and platforms.

6 (2) INDEPENDENT EVALUATION.—Not later
7 than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this
8 Act, the Comptroller General of the United States
9 shall submit to the appropriate congressional com-
10 mittees an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pro-
11 gram carried out under this section.

12 (c) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section may
13 be construed to supersede or limit existing authority under
14 section 404 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria
15 Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8754) or any other
16 provision of law related to internet freedom programming
17 in Iran.

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

1 **SEC. 7. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

2 Nothing in this Act may be construed as authorizing
3 the use of military force.

4 **SEC. 8. SANCTIONS AND EXPORT CONTROL SAVINGS**
5 **CLAUSE.**

6 Nothing in this Act may be construed to authorize
7 any transaction prohibited by the International Emer-
8 gency Economic Powers Act, the Iranian Transactions and
9 Sanctions Regulations, the Export Control Reform Act of
10 2018, the Export Administration Regulations, or any
11 other applicable sanctions or export-control authority, ex-
12 cept pursuant to a general or specific license, regulatory
13 authorization or other authorization issued by the relevant
14 agency.

15 **SEC. 9. DERIVATION OF FUNDS.**

16 Amounts made available to carry out this Act shall
17 be derived from amounts authorized to be appropriated
18 or otherwise made available to the Department of State.