

NWS Public Forecasts to be Guttet?

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Created 21/05/2005 - 2:47pm

Submitted by srlinuxx on Saturday 21st of May 2005 02:47:50 PM Filed under [Web](#) [1] [Legal](#) [2]

Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) has introduced a bill (S.786) that, if implemented in its current form, could mean the end of the freely-available and ad-free weather and climate information on the National Weather Service's web site.

I cringed when I read about the 'National Weather Services Duties Act of 2005.' I cringed some more when I started getting into the text of the measure for, like many draft bills, its language is far too broad, far too vague, and far too potentially damaging to a valuable public service that has existed for many decades longer than the Internet itself.

The NWS web site, run by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, provides a wealth of weather, hydrological, and climatological data that has, historically, been freely available in many forms to anyone who wants to go through it. Public forecasts, satellite images, radar maps, aviation forecasts... you name it. If it has to do with weather or climate, it'll be there, at no cost whatsoever to the end user.

Senator Santorum, for reasons probably best attributed to his campaign contributors, apparently wants to end all that in favor of creating what looks to me like a government-sponsored monopoly for companies like Accuweather and The Weather Channel (both of whom are, no surprise, in favor of the legislation).

If the bill is implemented in its current state, it would, in essence, prohibit NWS from providing any forecast, data, or other service that could not be provided by a private-sector source. Public forecasts would disappear, as would much of the other data NWS currently provides.

I don't know about the rest of you, but this bill looks like major Bad News to me. A portion of my tax dollars, and those of every other U.S. citizen, already go to fund the NWS. I don't see why any of us should have to pay twice for (probably) lower-quality information that's been liberally salted with ads (which is what we'll get if this bill goes through).

[Full Article](#) [3] with lively discussion.

[Web Legal](#)

Links:

- [1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/103>
- [2] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/106>
- [3] <http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2005/5/20/2452/38218>