



September 2019

Section-by-Section Summary

H.R. 4459, the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE

Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Ranking Member Greg Walden (R-OR), along with Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Brett Guthrie (R-KY), introduced H.R. 4459, the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act to protect our nation’s communications networks from foreign adversaries.

Americans increasingly rely on communications networks, whose security is becoming increasingly important. American communications networks serve critical infrastructure functions, which make them appealing targets for foreign adversaries. It is imperative that the United States mitigate threats posed by suspect communications equipment and services.

H.R. 4459, the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, protects our nation’s communications networks from foreign adversaries.

Section-by-Section Summary

Section 1

This section names the bill the “Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act.”

Section 2

United States communications providers rely heavily on network equipment or services manufactured and provided by foreign companies.

This section requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to publish a list of communications equipment or service providers that have been determined to pose national security risks by expert federal authorities outside of the FCC.

Section 3

To promote broadband deployment to unserved consumers, the FCC and other federal agencies subsidize the purchase of communications equipment or services.

This section prohibits the use of federal funds to purchase communications equipment or services from any company that poses a national security risk to American communications networks.

Section 4

It is critical that any existing equipment or services from any company that poses a national security risk be removed from operation.

This section requires the FCC to establish the Secure and Trusted Communications Reimbursement Program (Program) to assist small communications providers with the costs of removing prohibited equipment or services from their networks and replacing the prohibited equipment with more secure communications equipment or services. In creating the Program, the FCC must develop criteria for eligibility and use of the Program's funds. The FCC must also provide updates on the progress of fund recipients' efforts to remove prohibited equipment or services.

Section 5

The FCC's Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II program awarded federal funds to eligible communications providers to build communications networks in unserved areas in 2018. CAF recipients must make build-out and service commitments to be eligible for funding.

This section holds harmless any CAF recipient who has not yet received its CAF award and cannot meet its build-out and service commitments without using prohibited communications equipment or services. In that case, the CAF recipient can withdraw its application without penalty.

Section 6

Enforcement is key for securing our communications networks in the manner required by the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act.

This section requires the FCC to recover funds from any Program recipient that violates the provisions of the Act. This section also bans violators from participating in the Program and potentially other programs administered by the FCC.

Section 7

This section defines all the relevant terms in the bill.