

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 956

To establish a pilot program for police departments to use anonymous texts from citizens to augment their anonymous tip hotlines.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 11, 2011

Mr. KERRY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To establish a pilot program for police departments to use anonymous texts from citizens to augment their anonymous tip hotlines.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Text a Tip Act of
5 2011”.

6 **SEC. 2. A PILOT PROGRAM FOR TEXTING CRIME TIPS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General may make
8 grants to State or local police departments to implement
9 an anonymous tip program using cell phone text mes-
10 saging that comply with the requirements of this Act.

1 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—A State or local police depart-
2 ment that receives a grant under this Act shall use
3 amounts provided under the grant to develop, implement,
4 or expand the anonymous tip system using cell phone text
5 messaging which may include payment of the following ex-
6 penses:

7 (1) Salaries, personnel, training, technology,
8 and other costs directly related to the operation of
9 the program, including reward money.

10 (2) Promotion of the program including public
11 service announcements, printed advertisements, and
12 other forms of marketing.

13 (c) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of a grant
14 under this Act shall not exceed 75 percent of the cost of
15 the program.

16 (d) SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT.—Grant
17 amounts received under this Act shall be used to supple-
18 ment, and not supplant, non-Federal funds that would
19 otherwise be available for activities funded under this Act.

20 **SEC. 3. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.**

21 A texting tip program eligible for a grant under this
22 Act shall comply with the following requirements:

23 (1) A State or local police department shall ad-
24 minister the program.

1 (2) The incoming text messages shall be
2 stripped of any identifying information before it is
3 transmitted to the police through a verifiable tech-
4 nology or third party.

5 (3) The text tip shall not be traceable by any
6 means.

7 (4) The texting program shall not replace any
8 existing 1–800 tip hotlines.

9 (5) The police department shall train sufficient
10 personnel to intercept and respond to the text tips.

11 (6) The police department shall, to the extent
12 possible, make this program compatible with most
13 mobile phone providers.

14 (7) The texting program should include an un-
15 identifiable code that can be given to the tipster if
16 they want to send follow up information to the po-
17 lice, allowing for increased continuity and more ac-
18 curate information.

19 (8) The texting program shall include a feature
20 to abort a tip while it is in the process of being
21 given.

22 (9) The grantee shall not impose any additional
23 fees on the tipster’s mobile phone. Only standard
24 messaging rates from the tipster’s mobile phone pro-
25 vider shall apply.

1 (10) The police shall, to the extent possible,
2 promote the texting program to encourage citizens,
3 especially youth, to participate in the program.

4 **SEC. 4. APPLICATIONS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—To request a grant under this
6 Act, a State or local police department shall submit an
7 application to the Department of Justice in such form and
8 containing such information as the department may rea-
9 sonably require.

10 (b) CERTIFICATIONS.—Each application for a grant
11 under this Act shall contain the certification of the State
12 or local police department that the program for which the
13 grant is requested meets each of the requirements of this
14 Act.

15 **SEC. 5. REPORTS AND EVALUATIONS.**

16 (a) RECIPIENTS.—For each fiscal year, each recipient
17 of a grant under this Act during that fiscal year shall sub-
18 mit to the Attorney General a report on a date specified
19 by the Attorney General—

20 (1) regarding the effectiveness of activities car-
21 ried out using that grant; and

22 (2) including an evaluation in such form and
23 containing such information as the Attorney General
24 may reasonably require.

1 (b) ATTORNEY GENERAL.—The Attorney General
2 shall submit a yearly report on the effectiveness on the
3 activities carried out under this Act to the Committees on
4 the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representa-
5 tives.

6 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) The term “texting tip program” means a
9 program that—

10 (A) allows citizens to text tips anony-
11 mously to the police to aid in criminal justice;

12 (B) strips texts of identifying information;
13 and

14 (C) is used by the police to prevent and
15 solve crimes.

16 (2) The term “texting” means sending written
17 messages from a mobile phone. Texts is the plural
18 form of text messages.

19 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

20 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Attor-
21 ney General to carry out this Act \$5,000,000 for each of
22 fiscal years 2012 through 2017.

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