

S. 381, National Ocean Exploration Act

As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on April 28, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2021	2021-2026	2021-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	*	*	*
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	*	*	*
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	1,091	1,398
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	Yes	Mandate Effects	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2032?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between -\$500,000 and \$500,000.			

S. 381 would amend several ocean mapping and exploration programs administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The bill would authorize the appropriation of specific amounts for those programs over the 2021-2026 period. Because specific amounts are already authorized or appropriated under current law, CBO's estimate of the budgetary effects is based on the difference between the amounts in the bill and those specified in the law. In total, the bill would authorize the appropriation, on net, of \$1.4 billion for the following programs:

- \$317 million for the Ocean Exploration and Research program,
- \$268 million for the Ocean and Coastal Mapping program, and
- \$813 million for multiple programs related to hydrographic surveying (the measurement and description of features that affect maritime navigation).

In 2021, NOAA allocated \$77 million for similar purposes. Using historical spending patterns for similar activities, CBO estimates that implementing S. 381 would cost about \$1.1 billion over the 2021-2026 period and about \$300 million after 2026, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts.

S. 381 also would repeal the Undersea Research Program Act of 2009 and would codify the activities of the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council; the

Ocean Science and Technology Subcommittee; and the Ocean Research Management Subcommittee. Because the council and subcommittees currently exist and any new activities required under the bill would not require substantial action by NOAA or other federal agencies, CBO estimates that implementing the requirements related to those entities would not have a significant cost.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

**Table 1.
Estimated Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation Under S. 381**

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars						2021-2026
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Ocean Exploration Program							
Authorization ^a	17	60	60	60	60	60	317
Estimated Outlays	*	36	49	58	60	60	263
Ocean and Coastal Mapping Program							
Authorization ^b	43	45	45	45	45	45	268
Estimated Outlays	*	27	37	44	45	45	198
Hydrographic Surveys							
Authorization ^c	44	44	44	227	227	227	813
Estimated Outlays	*	26	36	152	194	222	630
Total Changes							
Authorization	104	149	149	332	332	332	1,398
Estimated Outlays	*	89	122	254	299	327	1,091

* = between zero and \$500,000.

a. The bill would authorize appropriations totaling \$60 million in 2021 for the Ocean Exploration Program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). However, in 2021, NOAA allocated \$43 million for that purpose. As a result, CBO estimates that S. 381 would increase authorizations in 2021 for that program by \$17 million—the difference between those amounts for that year.

b. The bill would authorize appropriations totaling \$45 million in 2021 for NOAA's Ocean and Coastal Mapping Program. However, in 2021, NOAA allocated \$2 million for that purpose. As a result, CBO estimates that S. 381 would increase authorizations in 2021 for that program by \$43 million—the difference between those amounts for that year.

c. Under current law, \$183 million is authorized to be appropriated annually for these hydrographic surveying activities through 2023. Because specific authorization levels already exist for those years, CBO only shows the incremental increase in authorization amounts that would be created by S. 381. The bill would authorize appropriations of \$227 million for hydrographic surveying in each year over the 2021-2023 period. Therefore, CBO estimates that S. 381 would increase authorizations in each year over the 2021-2023 period by \$44 million—the difference between the amount authorized by S. 381 (\$227 million annually) and the amounts authorized under current law (\$183 million annually) for each of those years.

S. 381 would expand NOAA's authority to accept and spend, without further appropriation, monetary gifts to assist in implementing the National Ocean Exploration program. Such gifts would be recorded as offsetting receipts, which are treated as reductions in direct spending.



CBO estimates that the net change in direct spending would be negligible because we expect that any monetary gifts would be spent soon after they are received.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Robert Reese. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.