



# Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM)

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2024-2025

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March 4, 2025

**Minnesota State Senate**

**Minnesota State House of Representatives**

**Minnesota State Capitol**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.**

**St. Paul, MN 55155**

Re: Widespread Support for SF530 / HF697 – Critical Gap-Filling Weather Radar Data for MN Public Safety

Dear Minnesota Senate Body and House of Representatives: This letter and the signatories listed below signals strong support for SF530 / HF697 – Appropriation for Weather Forecasting Gap-Filling Radar Data and urges you to **support** this important piece of bipartisan legislation that will benefit all Minnesotans immediately.

The entire country suffers from “weather gaps,” a lack of **complete, equitable** weather radar coverage from the existing federally owned network known as NEXRAD. Weather gaps exist because radars sit at a tilt and the earth curves away from a static weather radar location – therefore the further someone lives away from a NEXRAD, the higher it is looking over their head. This means weather impacts can occur with **no warning**, simply because there is limited visibility close to the ground in some areas. In MN, nearly **2.5 million people** live directly in a weather gap. Of note, these weather gaps disproportionately **impact tribal nations, rural, and vulnerable populations**. Additionally, because urban residents tend to travel outside of the cities for recreation, seasonal population explosions also increase vulnerability.

In many cases, real-time weather impacts are very different in our area than what is forecasted or expected making our response efforts even more challenging on the ground. To deal with this problem, we have often relied on storm spotters to go out into a storm and physically survey for potential trouble areas, which also puts our first responders and volunteers at risk. Just 3 years ago, tragedy reinforced this issue as **we lost a seasoned fire fighter/first responder. While responding to the call to ‘weather watch’, Ryan Erickson was unaware, due to the weather radar gap, that he was directly in harm’s way. He was killed on May 12, 2022, in Kandiyohi County, when a grain bin crushed his vehicle.**

The Federal government plans to address weather radar maintenance in 2040. This means they will work on updating radar technology, however there are no plans to add additional radars to fill the low-level radar gaps.

States are addressing this problem. There is a cost-effective solution, radar as a service for a reasonable cost through a public/private partnership. Through radar access, we can

accelerate the solution and count on the data to be integrated with federal partners for watches, warnings, and alerts.

Minnesota needs 8 gap-filling weather radars. The first radar has been online for over a year in Wendell, MN serving a 60-mile radius in the region. To date, there have been many case studies validating the critical visibility that the gap-filling radar provides. This gap filling radar has already been used to help alert snow squall warnings that likely saved lives and help inform daily response operations.

This bill will benefit multiple state agencies such as Department of Public Safety, Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Department of Transportation. Also benefiting from this bill will be county public safety officials, public safety answering points, and the public through a government website.

Several other states are pursuing similar gap-filling efforts and like the state has done with other projects such as the ARMER radio initiative, **Minnesota can lead and be an example for the rest of the country if we act now.**

Your support of this bill – filling every weather gap in our state is a clear bipartisan action and is a win/win for everyone. It ensures that we are fully prepared not **if**, but **when** the next weather disaster strikes. We urge you to help move SF530 through the appropriate committees for inclusion in the State of Minnesota budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Tschida', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristen Tschida,  
AMEM President