

Written Member Testimony: Congressman Robert Pittenger
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

February 28, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, I first want to thank you for offering the opportunity to speak today. Second, I want to thank you for including my request for a study on National Weather Service radar coverage gaps in last year's Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill. Although last year's language was not signed into law, I appreciate the signal of support from the Committee. Today, I ask for your continued support.

Many major metropolitan areas rely on the National Weather Service to detect and provide warning for severe weather such as thunderstorms and tornadoes. Some cities, however, must rely on radars that are far away and provide weak or inaccurate readings.

The city of Charlotte, for example, relies on a radar almost 100 miles away. In 2012, this resulted in the National Weather Service issuing a tornado warning 10 minutes after the tornado touched down. 7-year-old Jamal Stevens was in his bed when the tornado tore through his house, tossing him onto an embankment along Interstate 485, hundreds of feet away from his room. In 2013, the current system provided a warning, but for citizens in an entirely wrong neighborhood. More recently, a tornado in December of 2015 struck neighboring Union County with no warning from the National Weather Service. Fortunately, our region has not suffered any fatalities due to the inadequate coverage, but we shouldn't wait for tragedy to act.

The Charlotte region is just one example of dangerously inaccurate weather radar coverage. Additional areas of inadequate radar coverage include Columbus, Ohio; northwest New Mexico; and Washington State. Our language request would require the Commerce

Department to identify weak coverage areas and formulate a plan to resolve the problem, whether that be by constructing a new radar, or by improving existing government radars. Far too many lives are at risk for a problem the federal government can easily address. Thank you for your consideration.