Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup
H.R. 676, H.R. 1482, H.R. 1496, H.R. 1713, H.R. 1715, H.R. 1734, and H.R. 1735

March 29, 2023

Good morning. I'm excited to kick off our first markup this Congress and begin moving our legislative agenda.

The bills we're considering today span a range of issues and touch a number of agencies within our jurisdiction, but they all contribute to a larger effort to improve federal R&D, make it more efficient, and help our science agencies to better serve our communities.

The first bill under consideration is H.R. 676, the Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act. This bipartisan bill requires NOAA to collaborate with Indian Tribes on their work on ocean acidification research and monitoring.

Better community engagement with Tribes, as well as state and local government, will improve NOAA's work to support the health and long-term growth of our marine ecosystems.

Next up we have two bills that will help improve our ability to communicate information during extreme weather events.

As an Oklahoman, the ability to provide quick and efficient emergency weather communications is especially important to me, particularly as tornado season is gearing up. The more quickly and accurately we can warn people of severe weather, the more lives we can save.

So I appreciate my fellow Oklahoman Rep. Bice for introducing the NOAA Weather Radio Modernization Act, which upgrades NOAA's severe weather warning system.

By repairing transmission sites and antennas, improving signal strength, and establishing backup capabilities, this bill ensures that NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) can continue broadcasting emergency warnings straight to homes and businesses across the country.

The National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act will also help improve our ability to warn Americans of severe weather.

The National Weather Service uses a legacy, custom instant messaging system to communicate with forecast offices and emergency personnel. It was developed decades ago and cannot accommodate the number of people who need to use the system during severe weather events.

H.R. 1482 directs NOAA to transition to a commercial, off-the-shelf instant messaging service, which will make communications more efficient and reliable. A number of our Committee Members have cosponsored this bill and I thank you all for your efforts.

Next on the docket is the DOE and USDA Interagency Research Act, a bill I've introduced with my colleague Ranking Member Lofgren.

As we discussed at a hearing earlier this month, the Department of Energy is uniquely positioned to advance our knowledge and solve scientific challenges. With its advanced computing capabilities, world-class research facilities, and tremendous expertise, DOE can conduct research on cross-cutting issues and help other federal agencies on their scientific priorities.

Working with USDA, DOE can help advance crop science, enhance precision agriculture, maximize carbon storage, and improve rural energy infrastructure.

Partnerships like this ensure we're making the most of our taxpayer dollars.

Similarly, the Advanced Weather Model Computing Development Act codifies the partnership between DOE and NOAA, which will improve our climate modeling and weather forecasting.

Accurate predictions require the analysis of extremely large and complex data sets—which DOE can conduct with its high-performance computing abilities. Not only can this collaboration improve NOAA's forecasting, but the opportunity to analyze these large data sets will help to advance machine learning at DOE.

I'd like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Environment Subcommittee, Rep. Miller and Rep. Ross, for introducing this good-government bill.

The next bill we'll consider is the TRANQ Research Act, sponsored by Rep. Collins, Chairman of the Research & Technology Subcommittee, and Rep. Caraveo, with broad bipartisan support.

Unfortunately, we are all too familiar with the destruction opioids like fentanyl are causing our communities. Now, these drugs are being mixed with animal tranquilizers to create deadly new combinations.

Drugs like "tranq" are presenting new challenges for law enforcement, health care professionals, and first responders. Without a better understanding of this drug, we cannot slow its spread, combat its effects, or ensure safe handling.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has already done extraordinary work on fentanyl detection and this bill allows them to apply their resources and expertise to analyzing these new variants.

With NIST's help, we'll improve our ability to detect and identify these drugs and improve the tools available to keep first responders and law enforcement safe when dealing with them.

Finally, the last bill we'll consider is the Mathematical and Statistical Modeling Education Act, sponsored by Representative Houlahan and Representative Baird.

As someone trained in agricultural economics, I understand the value of conducting mathematical and statistical analyses. This bill will allow us to better teach those skills through R&D into new curricula and teaching methods.

A strong STEM pipeline is how America will stay competitive in the decades to come, and I appreciate my colleagues' work to strengthen STEM education with this bill.

I'd like to note that all of these bills are bipartisan and were developed through a collaborative process. I appreciate that we're continuing the Science Committee's practice of bipartisanship, and I hope we can continue to work together on our shared priorities moving forward.

I look forward to a productive markup today, and I yield to the Ranking Member for her opening remarks.