

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY

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HEARING ON
THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION
(NOAA) AS AN INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC AGENCY IN STATUTE

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY.
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Good morning -- Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Lofgren and Members of the Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this critical hearing regarding the future of NOAA. As background, I was the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere from 2001 to 2007, a position which included being NOAA Administrator. Again, thank you for this hearing opportunity today!

It is also a great pleasure to be present today with Dr. Tim Gallaudet, RDML USN (ret.) and Dr. Neil Jacobs, who both recently served in that same role. We are here today to discuss the future of NOAA, an agency since 1970 that has been within the Department of Commerce and was formed without a congressionally approved Organic Act. We are asking for your support to formally establish the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within statute as an independent scientific research and development agency.

Some of you may be young enough to remember when I was NOAA Administrator. Securing congressional passage of an Organic Act for NOAA was one of my highest priorities. Seventeen years ago, I testified before this committee and thanked then Chairman Sherwood Boehlert, and Ranking Member Bart Gordon and told them how much I truly appreciated the bipartisan manner in

which they conducted the Science Committee and their strong support for NOAA. That is a famous legacy that has continued on this committee through the years. I thanked them for their leadership and recognized Congressman Vern Ehlers for his leadership efforts to pass a NOAA Organic Act on the House floor. Sadly, it failed to advance that year. But I am back again to press this need one more time!

We know that NOAA was created by an Executive Order by President Nixon. NOAA was created to serve a national need "...for better protection of life and property from natural hazards...for a better understanding of the total environment...[and] for exploration and development leading to the intelligent use of our marine resources..." It became effective on October 3, 1970 under 5 U.S.C. 906, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/5/906#>:

The establishment of NOAA may be traced back to 1966 with enactment of the Marine Resources and Engineering Development Act of 1966 (Pub. L. 89-454). The Act declared it to be the policy of the United States to: "develop, encourage, and maintain a coordinated, comprehensive, and long-range national program in marine science for the benefit of mankind, to assist in protection of health and property, enhancement of commerce, transportation, and national security, rehabilitation of our commercial fisheries, and increased utilization of these and other resources." The Act created a Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources. It was comprised of 15 members with experience in different fields of government, academia, and industry. This commission would eventually be known as the Stratton Commission, so named for its chairman, Julius A. Stratton, who was also chairman of the Ford Foundation. The commission's work culminated in a final report, "Our Nation and the Sea: A Plan for National Action" (known as the Stratton Commission Report) submitted to the President and Congress on January 9, 1969.

<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mts/mts/2004/00000038/00000004/art00013?crawler=true>.

The establishment of major parts of NOAA can be traced back to the 1800s, including the Weather Bureau in 1870, a Fisheries Commission in 1871, and the Survey of the Coast office in 1807 by President Jefferson. As such, NOAA is the oldest science agency in the United States. Its 200th anniversary was celebrated in 2007 during my administration of NOAA. <https://www.noaa.gov/noaa-legal-history>

NOAA services include climate predictions and projections; comprehensive weather and water reports, forecasts, and warnings; nautical charts and

navigational information; delivery of a range of Earth observations and scientific data sets including Space weather for use by public, private and academic sectors. These services seriously affect the lives of everyone on this planet on a daily basis.

In this regard, we have become ever more dependent on understanding the science involved and appropriate action, needed to ensure, that our planet (the only one locally that we can call home!) and all the life forms that inhabit it are able to continue to thrive. It is vital that NOAA have a Congressional charter to ensure these increasing missions can be continuously supported with the necessary resources. An appropriate forming of NOAA as an independent agency with an Organic Act in statute, in my view, is absolutely necessary!

Unfortunately, the need for an independent agency with an appropriate Organic Act has only grown with increased scientific understanding of our planet's Oceans and Atmosphere. NOAA's long list of requirements has both increased over the years, and meeting those requirements is critical to our future and survival.

I am deeply grateful to have had the privilege to lead the highly dedicated NOAA workforce during my tenure. Together, like my colleagues next to me at this table, we achieved great things for the American people and the global community. This is a brief list of team achievements from my time at NOAA:

- Establishment of the Pacific-Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System and deployment of DART Buoys and Argo Floats
- Adoption of the Hurricane Weather Research and Forecasting (HWRF) Model
- Expansion of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS)
- Development of a Climate Change Science Initiative
- Coral Reef Protections and deployment of Ocean Acidification Buoys
- Establishment of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Papahānaumokuākea) Marine National Monument, doubling the size of the Pacific Islands Sanctuary
- Revitalization of the NOAA Corps and addition of NOAA fleet vessels
- Adoption of the Open Rivers Initiative that supported local efforts to remove obsolete dams, modernize water infrastructure, and restore rivers across the western United States to benefit people, fish, and wildlife.
- Establishment of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS)

Our NOAA Administrator colleague, Dr. Rick Spinrad leads an equally dedicated and hard-working team of NOAA employees that are tackling new oceanic and atmospheric challenges from the Blue Economy to increased global temperatures accompanied by increased severe storm impacts. Not just stronger hurricanes and more violent tornadoes, but atmospheric rivers, droughts, heat waves, increased wildfires, and space weather impacts from solar activity plus the ravages of climate change, the future of American aquaculture and healthy coral reefs.

NOAA is America's leading scientific research and operational agency for Climate, Weather, Fisheries and Ocean Policy leadership. An independent NOAA is needed to be able to address current and future challenges without an antiquated tethered relationship that was poorly conceived from its outset and has frankly, never worked.

My grateful thanks again to Chairman Lucas for scheduling this hearing!!! In closing I urge your consideration and support to establish NOAA as a separate and independent scientific research and development agency with an Organic Act in Statute.

Thank you for your consideration and to each of you here today for your attention to the future of NOAA!

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