



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup
H.R. 6093 - The Weather Act Reauthorization

November 8, 2023

Thank you all for joining us at this markup.

We're here today to consider the Weather Act Reauthorization, a bill to strengthen American forecasting and emergency preparedness.

This bill updates and modernizes the Weather Act of 2017, which was the first comprehensive weather authorization in more than two decades.

As we started to develop this Reauthorization, we held multiple hearings on the Weather Act of 2017 – asking what worked and what could be improved.

We heard about some tremendous success stories: because of the Weather Act of 2017, we were able to improve hurricane track predictions by more than ten percent and increase tornado warning lead times by more than ten minutes.

We heard about the value of giving NOAA more access to commercial weather data.

And we heard about the need to address evolving challenges like atmospheric rivers, coastal flooding and storm surges, and aviation weather.

After months of feedback from dozens of stakeholders, we've crafted a bill that builds on the successes of the Weather Act while tackling the next generation of forecasting needs.

As a farmer and rancher, I'm particularly proud that this bill has a strong focus on improving subseasonal to seasonal forecasting. This information is critical to decisions on planting and harvesting and helps agricultural producers across the country make better decisions about how they grow America's food and fiber.

The bill also helps protect lives and property by strengthening our emergency preparedness. It does that in a few ways – first, by improving our ability to forecast severe weather and second, by enhancing our ability to quickly and effectively communicate when emergencies are approaching. The everyday citizen needs to know what an EF-3 tornado warning means and how to act on it. This bill does that.

As we heard repeatedly from stakeholders and NOAA themselves, the 2017 Weather Act's provisions to allow NOAA to use commercial weather data were incredibly successful. So this legislation builds out that authority, allowing NOAA to take advantage of new and innovative technologies that provide more data sources than ever before.

The bill also improves operational efficiency and cuts red tape by eliminating 15 different reports, plans, or strategies to Congress. This ensures that NOAA is focused on taking action rather than conducting bureaucratic assessments.

Taken together, these provisions put the U.S. on a more competitive footing globally when it comes to accurate and effective forecasting.

And make no mistake: superiority in weather forecasting has real economic impacts. Accurate forecasts have significant benefits to our economy, from better crop production to more reliable shipping to the protection of lives and properties during severe storms.

The bill before us today includes provisions from 12 individual bills representing the interests of more than 30 members from both sides of the aisle. That number will grow as we adopt additional language today.

I don't have time in this brief opening statement to highlight all of that work, but I would like to thank everyone in this room who put forth bills to improve our ability to accurately forecast weather.

We also have a number of bipartisan amendments today that I believe will further improve this already strong bill and protect all Americans regardless of geography.

I'm looking forward to moving this bill through the House and passing it into law.