



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Full Committee Markup of the Weather Act Reauthorization Act of 2025

September 10, 2025

Thank you all for joining us at this markup.

We're here today to consider H.R. 5089, the Weather Act Reauthorization Act of 2025, a bill to strengthen American forecasting and emergency preparedness.

Given the tragic flooding event in my home state of Texas in July, and with hurricane season in full swing, this legislation could not come at a more crucial time.

This bill updates and modernizes the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017, also known as the Weather Act, which was the first comprehensive weather authorization in more than two decades.

There have been extensive discussions regarding this legislation across the aisle and between chambers. After reflecting on those conversations, we are now considering H.R. 5089—a bill built on the strong foundation of the measure that passed the House with overwhelming support last Congress.

By taking up this proven framework, we are establishing a clear and united House position heading into potential negotiations with the Senate.

I look forward to working with Senator Cruz to ensure Texans and all Americans are best prepared for severe weather events.

Since 2023, this committee has held multiple hearings on the Weather Act of 2017 to evaluate what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

We have heard some tremendous success stories: thanks to the Weather Act of 2017, hurricane track predictions have advanced by more than ten percent, and tornado warning lead times have increased by over ten minutes.

In July, the National Weather Service provided a 201-minute lead time for Kerr County, Texas, warning of imminent flash flooding on the Guadalupe River.

Yet despite that warning, many precious lives were tragically lost—including 27 campers and counselors at Camp Mystic.

This heartbreaking event underscores the urgent need to strengthen the connection between forecasts and the timely flow of information to the public.

Today's bill equips NOAA with the tools needed to carry out its vital mission of protecting lives and property by bolstering our emergency preparedness.

It does so in two key ways: first, by improving our ability to forecast severe weather, and second, by enhancing how quickly and effectively we can communicate when emergencies are approaching.

Every citizen should understand what an EF-3 tornado warning entails, the severity of a flash flood warning, and—most importantly—how to respond appropriately.

Excellence in weather forecasting also carries real economic benefits.

Accurate forecasts support better crop production, guide the safest and most fuel-efficient flight paths, and provide reliable outlooks for critical points of commerce like Port Houston.

Additionally, we learned about the value of granting NOAA greater access to commercial weather data generated by both direct measurements and space-based remote sensing instruments on commercial satellites. This novel approach to obtaining significantly more data was established as a pilot program, enabling NOAA to cautiously test a new direction without wasting taxpayer money.

The 2017 Weather Act's provisions, which enabled NOAA to use commercial data, proved highly successful, according to stakeholder feedback.

This legislation builds on that success by broadening NOAA's authority to harness new and innovative technologies that provide more data sources than ever before.

Discussions emphasized the need to address evolving challenges like flash flooding, atmospheric rivers, storm surges, and aviation weather.

Together, these provisions put NOAA on the strongest path toward a new Golden Age of science and toward fulfilling its most important mission: protecting life and property. They also strengthen America's global competitiveness in forecasting accuracy and effectiveness.

I want to thank former Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Lofgren for their hard work on this legislation.

This is a fiscally responsible bill that prioritizes weather forecasting, and I look forward to moving it through Congress and seeing it signed into law by President Trump.