



COMMITTEE ON

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Science Committee Ranking Member Frank Lucas**

### **Subcommittee on Environment Hearing - The Future of Forecasting: Building a Stronger U.S. Weather Enterprise**

May 16, 2019

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Thank you, Chairwoman Fletcher, for holding this hearing. As I stated at the NOAA budget hearing, weather forecasting is among the most important matters in this committee's jurisdiction and one of my top priorities this Congress.

We rely on accurate weather forecasting for everything from efficient crop planting to protecting life and property. From hurricanes to wildfires to tornadoes, we have an obligation to provide our citizens the most accurate information on weather events so that they can make informed decisions for their own well-being.

Weather forecasting is especially important in my home state. Two of Oklahoma's finest universities – Oklahoma State and the University of Oklahoma - have long histories of researching weather patterns. The National Weather Center is based in Norman and is a national leader in researching climate and weather.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the creation of Oklahoma's Mesonet, founded as a partnership between the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State.

The Mesonet consists of a series of environmental monitoring stations which provide data to customers across the state of Oklahoma. Our Mesonet is a valuable climate tool and enjoys broad public support. I believe the Mesonet can serve as a model for improving forecasting across the nation and I look forward to discussing this with our witnesses.

This committee has a bipartisan history of weather research and forecasting policy. During the 115th Congress, we passed the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act. This legislation provided NOAA important tools to help address its sub-seasonal to seasonal forecasting abilities by partnering with the private sector to collect weather data and integrate it into its forecasts.

More recently, Congress passed the National Integrated Drought Information System – Known as Ny-dis – Reauthorization Act. The NIDIS reauthorization built on previous efforts to help monitor and predict droughts and attempt to mitigate these effects.

While Congress has taken steps to improve weather forecasting, we must be certain that other policies aren't undercutting our abilities. We've heard concerns from NASA and NOAA that the recent FCC wireless spectrum auction could potentially undermine the quality of weather forecasts due to the overlap with frequencies used to detect moisture.

We all support the many benefits of 5G, including faster and more reliable connections. But we must deploy it in a way that doesn't lower the quality of our satellite's remote sensing abilities. I hope the FCC can work to address concerns raised by the science community.

I want to thank our witnesses for sharing their expertise today. We have a panel of government, private sector, and academic witnesses whose perspectives should inform this committee's actions moving forward.

In closing, let me state that working toward improved weather forecasts will be a top priority for me this Congress. While we have made progress in improving the accuracy of weather forecasting, many challenges remain. This Committee should be a leader in helping the federal government, the private sector, and the academic community pool its resources to take the next step in continuing American leadership in weather forecasting.

Thank you, I yield back.

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