



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS

Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

**Representative Brian Babin
Environment Subcommittee Hearing
Opening Statement
“Weathering the Storm: Improving Hurricane Resiliency Through
Research”
July 22, 2019**

Thank you for holding this hearing, Chairwoman Fletcher.

This hearing could not take place in a more fitting location. Less than two years ago, Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas. Harvey left a staggering amount of damage in its wake. Eighty-eight lives were lost. The National Hurricane Center estimated more than \$125 billion in damages occurred due to the hurricane and subsequent flooding. Over 200,000 homes, many outside of the 100-year flood plain, were damaged, forcing nearly 40,000 people into temporary shelters. I could continue citing statistics, but the point remains that Harvey was a devastating event for the residents of my district and surrounding communities.

If we need a reminder of the impacts of severe weather, Hurricane Barry struck Louisiana last week, dropping 15 inches of rain in a period of hours. Though the Atlantic Hurricane season began on June 1st, we saw last year that many of the most devastating hurricanes did not make landfall until August and September.

Earlier today, members of this committee had the opportunity to tour the National Weather Service office near Galveston, which was one of the first cities to be devastated by Harvey. We had the opportunity to hear first hand about the innovative forecasting techniques utilized to determine the paths of hurricanes.

This committee has played a critical role in the development of weather forecasting. In April 2017, President Trump signed into law the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act- legislation drafted by Ranking Member Lucas. Among the provisions included was section 104, which directed NOAA to enhance hurricane forecasting by improving the prediction of rapid intensification and track of hurricanes, the forecast and communication of storm surges from hurricanes, and the communication of these threats. We will hear about NOAA’s ongoing efforts to implement these provisions and

what other steps this committee can take during this Congress to improve hurricane forecasting.

Knowing what will happen is only half the battle. In addition to understanding the patterns of behavior of hurricanes, we will hear today about how we can better allocate our research priorities in order for communities to be more resilient when a severe hurricane makes landfall. As many in this room saw a couple of years ago, homes, businesses, roads, dams, and even federal government facilities, such as Johnson Space Center, were unprepared for the damaging effects of Harvey.

Houstonians are strong and resilient, as we've seen in the recovery from Hurricane Harvey over the last two years. We have an obligation to ensure that the residents of Houston, along with other communities across the country, can have greater certainty that they will know how strong a hurricane will be, and feel confident that they live in resilient communities.

I want to thank our panel of witnesses today for sharing their expertise with us. Thank you, Chairwoman Fletcher. I yield back.