



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Environment Subcommittee Hearing

A Task of EPIC Proportions: Reclaiming U.S. Leadership in Weather Modeling and Prediction

November 20, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Fletcher, for holding today's hearing.

I've said before that the continued improvement of weather forecasting is one of the most important topics in this committee's jurisdiction. Accurate forecasting not only helps our businesses make strategic plans, but it helps us to protect lives and properties during severe weather events. We need an accurate and trustworthy system.

The United States was once the world's leader in numerical weather prediction, but we can't credibly make that claim today. This was apparent in 2012, when American forecasts predicted Hurricane Sandy would weaken over the Atlantic, while the European forecast model correctly saw Sandy making landfall.

Congress saw the need for rapid improvement in U.S. weather forecasts. In the supplemental appropriations package passed in response to Sandy in early 2013, Congress provided more than \$20 million to NOAA to help improve forecast modeling and computing resource needs. While this assistance resulted in some improvements to our forecasting abilities, we needed to do more.

This committee passed the Weather Act during the 115th Congress, which was signed into law in April 2017. The Weather Act, the most significant weather legislation passed by Congress in more than 25 years, provided authorities and direction for NOAA in its weather research and forecasting efforts. One of the most consequential provisions in the bill was direction for NOAA to begin purchasing more commercial data in creating forecasts. This came in response to a recognized need for NOAA to better utilize the knowledge and expertise of the private sector and the research community.

An extension of the Weather Act was signed into law earlier this year. Included in this legislation was an authorization of the Earth Prediction Innovation Center – known as EPIC. This center represents a new way of weather modeling for NOAA by utilizing the computing resources and expertise of the academic community, private enterprise, and others who want to help the U.S. regain leadership. It will also utilize new computing resources, a significant reason why the U.S. has lagged in its forecasting abilities.

The authorizing legislation for EPIC became law in January. While NOAA has taken initial steps to implement EPIC, progress has been slow. We must move forward quickly to implement this legislation and begin closing the gap with the Europeans, Canadians, and others who have surpassed us. Our panel of witnesses will help us identify potential bottlenecks in implementing EPIC and what we can do to help the process move forward quickly.

Dr. Neil Jacobs is no stranger to our committee, and I want to thank him for again appearing before us today. He has made the quick and effective implementation of EPIC a personal priority. His education and professional background will be invaluable as we continue to improve the accuracy of our weather forecasts and I look forward to working with him on this effort.

I again want to thank Chairwoman Fletcher for conducting today's hearing and I also want to thank Chairwoman Johnson for her shared commitment to helping the U.S. again be the world leader in weather forecasting.

Thank you and I yield back.