Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Roger Marshall

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

November 20, 2019

Thank you for holding this hearing, Chairwoman Fletcher. I want to thank our witnesses for appearing before the subcommittee, especially Dr. Jacobs who is in front of the Committee for the third time this Congress, and all of you on the panel for sharing your perspectives.

Weather prediction is something that affects the constituents of every Member up here. From the fields of Kansas to the Outer Banks of North Carolina, anticipating the strength and conditions of the next weather event can save lives and property.

I'm proud to say the Science Committee acted decisively last Congress by passing the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act (the Weather Act) and the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Reauthorization Act.

The Weather Act was the first authorizing legislation to address weather forecasting in 25 years and prioritized improving weather data, modeling, computing, and forecasting. I'd like to extend my gratitude to Ranking Member Lucas for introducing what is now a law and for his continued leadership on this issue.

The NIDIS Reauthorization Act established the Earth Prediction Innovation Center (EPIC), the topic of our hearing today. EPIC, when completed, will crowdsource the expertise of the private sector and the research communities to improve our forecasting models. This aligns with Congress' vision for the program by leveraging the weather enterprise to provide knowledge and skill on numerical weather prediction.

The Federal Government should be doing more to utilize the resources of private companies and university researchers, who are often the leading sources of innovations. In addition to having world-class facilities and minds, private companies and academics are extremely flexible in research development and cost-effective in their methods.

It is in the best interest of Kansan farmers, ranchers, emergency personnel, and every day residents to have more accurate forecasts. And EPIC is an important step in the improvement of our forecasting ability.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused nearly $70 billion in damage as it made landfall in Cuba and the Northeast coast of the United States. This was the catalyzing weather event which caused Congress to examine how we could improve weather forecasting. We don't know when the next "superstorm" will be, but it is my hope that through EPIC, NOAA and the National Weather Service will be fully prepared to predict, respond, and recovery from the next severe weather event.

While NOAA has taken the initial steps to implement EPIC, we must see a stronger sense of urgency moving forward. Because it is designed as a community approach to weather prediction and modeling, I look forward to hearing how Dr. Mass and others have been involved in implementing this center and getting their feedback on how to ensure a successful and timely completion.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.