



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing – *“Coping with Compound Crises: Extreme Weather, Social Injustice, and a Global Pandemic”*

September 30th, 2020

Thank you for holding today’s hearing, Chairwoman Sherrill.

Today is the last day of September, which means we are three quarters of the way through 2020. Today’s hearing will focus on a number of factors which have combined to make this an especially difficult year for our country. Some of these challenges are new, and some have been ongoing.

Unfortunately, extreme weather events are not new, although there have been a higher number of these events this year. We have seen an unusually active Atlantic hurricane season, with 23 named storms to date, and still two months to go. Communities along the Gulf Coast have been battered by strong winds, heavy rain, and severe flooding.

One of the many images future generations might remember of this year were pictures of communities across the west bathed in orange due to the prevalence of wildfire across many western states. More than 7.5 million acres of land have burned which is well above the rolling 10-year average of wildfire damage. Entire communities in states like California and Oregon have literally burned to the ground.

Better forecasting and public warning of extreme weather events has long been a focus of this committee. I am proud to have introduced the Weather Act of 2017, which directed NOAA to address how we can better forecast the occurrence of extreme weather events and how we can help the public be better prepared in the occurrence of these events. We have made strides in these efforts, but we still have a long way to go.

A global pandemic has made forecasting even more challenging. We have heard from NOAA about the steps they have taken in order to ensure the continuity of operations to help warn Americans of pending extreme weather events. Unfortunately, a pandemic does not stop hurricanes, tornadoes, and flash floods. I think I speak for all my

colleagues here when I say how much we appreciate our forecasters for continuing this valuable work under challenging circumstances.

The committee has heard from federal agencies and research universities about the impacts of COVID-19 on our country's research and development efforts. The message was clear: our success depends on science. We must continue to move forward on scientific innovation and support our research enterprise.

I thank our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what lessons we can learn from this year, and how we can utilize our federal research and development efforts to prepare for future events.

Thank you and I yield back.