



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:

What's the Forecast: A look at the Future of Weather Research

June 14, 2022

Good morning, everyone. I want to thank Chairwoman Sherrill for holding today's hearing on a very important topic: the future of weather research. I also want to welcome our witnesses and I look forward to your testimony.

The U.S. Weather Enterprise—the public sector, the private sector, and academia—have made considerable strides in improving forecasts over the past few decades. However, we must not become complacent and assume this progress is enough—it is not.

As many of you know, high-temperature records are being shattered across the southern U.S. Last Saturday, temperatures in my district and the surrounding areas in the DFW Metroplex exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time in 2022. The last time we exceeded 100 degrees this early in the year was 2010.

We have often discussed in this Committee how climate change is leading to more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

From 2017 to 2021, the cumulative cost of billion-dollar or greater weather and climate disasters was nearly three-quarters of a trillion dollars. And last year alone, there were twenty major disasters resulting in approximately 145 billion dollars of damages. These damages, and the human toll, would have been would far greater if we hadn't previously invested in weather research.

It is essential that we have the necessary resources and capabilities to accurately predict these weather events, as well as to prepare our communities for them.

In order to better understand what is needed to support American excellence in weather forecasting, we turned to the experts.

In 2019, Congress charged NOAA's Science Advisory Board (SAB) to assess the needs for weather research. Specifically, the SAB was charged with identifying the Federal investments in weather research and forecasting needed over the next decade. As a result, NOAA's SAB produced the Priorities of Weather Research report in December of 2021.

We are fortunate to have four experts in weather research testifying this morning, which includes the NOAA SAB report's co-leads. This report could not be better timed. In 2022, we have to shift the paradigm around weather forecasting in the U.S.

We must make decisions about forecasting improvements with the needs of the most vulnerable communities at the forefront, and not as an afterthought. This will require robust and consistent funding from Congress. This Committee will have a key legislative and oversight role to play.

Today's hearing is a continuation of this Committee's work to discuss topics pertinent to improving U.S. weather forecasting.

The major themes in this report align with topics we have often discussed on this Committee. The case has been made many times over for the need to improve weather forecasting in the U.S.

What is left for Congress to do is provide clear direction, and commensurate funding, to support weather research improvements. We cannot afford to underinvest in weather research. The time to act is now.

I am looking forward to hearing from our esteemed panel of witnesses what the Federal government must prioritize in weather research. I hope today's hearing will serve as a roadmap for the future of NOAA's National Weather Service and the Weather Enterprise. With that, I yield back.