



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Environment Subcommittee Hearing – What’s the Forecast: The Future of Weather Research

June 14, 2022

Thank you for holding today’s hearing on this important topic, Chairwoman Sherrill.

Since I became the ranking member of this committee, I have time and again stated that the work we do on weather forecasting is as important as any topic before us.

Protecting life and property, helping first responders anticipate extreme weather events, or ensuring that farmers and ranchers know when best to plant crops are only a few of the reasons having accurate weather forecasts is invaluable. And we can only have accurate weather forecasts if we continue to invest resources in researching weather patterns.

The ranking member of the subcommittee and I are both honored to represent Oklahoma, home to some of the most important weather research occurring today. The National Weather Center, located in Norman, brings together NOAA researchers, University of Oklahoma faculty, and local weather forecasters under one roof. This collaboration is an important model for how NOAA research should operate.

Additionally, Oklahoma is home to the nation’s premier Mesonet, which provides real-time data thanks to a series of small, but powerful monitoring states across the state. The Mesonet has been a valuable resource for farmers, ranchers, first responders and weather forecasters, for more than 25 years, and I believe our Mesonet should serve as a model for other local weather observation systems across the country.

It is with this background that I was proud to sponsor the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act, more commonly known as the Weather Act. This legislation, signed into law by President Trump in April of 2017, was the most significant weather-related legislation to become law in 25 years. This legislation helped redefine NOAA’s weather research priorities in recent years and also helped spur innovation by creating a pilot program which directed the utilization of commercially purchased data in NOAA’s weather models.

The Weather Act is due for reauthorization at the end of September 2023. Though that is more than a year away, I consider today’s hearing to be the kickoff in our

reauthorization process and encourage our witnesses to frame their recommendations with this in mind.

In December 2020, Congress directed NOAA's Science Advisory Board to commission a report on future priorities in weather research. This report, completed in December 2021, utilized some of the finest minds across the weather enterprise. This report contains many recommendations, ranging from improving Earth-system modeling to increasing NOAA's computing capacity. These recommendations should inform how we approach reauthorizing the Weather Act.

Today's hearing is important because it provides a starting point for us in discussions about areas where we have improved our knowledge of weather research as well as gaps we need to address in the future.

I thank our witnesses for sharing their expertise with us and I look forward to a productive discussion. Thank you and I yield back.