



Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Max Miller

Environment Subcommittee Hearing
Reauthorizing the Weather Act: Data and Innovation for Predictions

March 28, 2023

I want to welcome everyone to our first Environment Subcommittee hearing of the 118th Congress. I am honored Chairman Lucas has placed his trust in me to lead the subcommittee and I'm excited to work with my colleague on the other side of the aisle, Ranking Member Ross, to continue the productive, bipartisan history this subcommittee has enjoyed.

Today's hearing will be the first in a series that touches on a very important topic: U.S. weather policy. As the Committee with sole jurisdiction over the National Weather Service and the scientific activities at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – or NOAA – we have the privilege of shaping the future of weather forecasts and modeling.

This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. The stated mission of the National Weather Service is to provide services that protect life and property, as well as enhance the national economy. And I can promise you, any legislation we pursue will only help them succeed in this mission.

In 2022 alone, there were 18 separate billion-dollar weather events that took the lives of 474 people and cost a total of \$165 billion in damage to infrastructure, homes, businesses, and more. In fact, a typical year in the U.S. sees 26,000 thunderstorms, 5,000 floods, and 1,300 tornadoes. That's more extreme weather events than any other country.

So if it wasn't obvious already, weather forecasts provide much more valuable information than indicating if you need an umbrella or not. Weather information directly saves lives and protects entire communities, like the ones I represent in Northern Ohio, from economic devastation.

The good news is that the many parties involved in this work understand the value of forecasting and come together to improve the timely delivery and overall accuracy of weather products and services.

Collectively known as the U.S. Weather Enterprise, each sector – public, private, and academic – plays a critical role in understanding, observing, forecasting, and warning communities of extreme weather. There is no single sector or provider who can effectively develop and deploy all the tools needed to predict and communicate weather patterns or extreme events.

Today's hearing will focus primarily on one particular piece of the puzzle: the private sector and what they bring to the table for NOAA and the Weather Service. The data and innovation they offer can make immediate and impactful improvements to the status quo.

For example, we'll hear about how atmospheric temperature data collected from satellites is processed and integrated into operational models. We'll also hear about high altitude water vapor data collected from sensors on commercial planes. And we'll even hear about the

development of uncrewed vehicles that can go right into the eye of an active hurricane to collect data there.

It's all very exciting stuff and truly on the cutting-edge of scientific innovation. But completing the transition from initial demonstration of these technologies to long term commercial operation requires policy that encourages federal partnerships. That is what I hope to take away from today's hearing: how we in Congress can empower the weather enterprise to innovate and excel through public-private partnerships.

Doing so will enable our economic growth and protect the essential pillars of our economy, like agriculture, that are dependent on knowing what the weather will be tomorrow, as well as next season.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here. I look forward to each of your testimonies.