Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Max Miller

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing

Winning in Weather: U.S. Competitiveness in Forecasting and Modeling

March 6, 2024

I want to welcome everybody to this morning's hearing, Winning in Weather: U.S. Competitiveness in Forecasting and Modeling. This is the Environment Subcommittee's third hearing this Congress related to reauthorizing the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017, an important effort for the Committee at large.

Today's hearing continues our examination of U.S. weather policy and how best to update the crucial work started by the Weather Act seven years ago. In November, this committee unanimously passed the Weather Act Reauthorization and now we look towards the future of the United States' leadership in weather forecasting.

Today, we will hear from witnesses who all have extensive experience in the U.S. weather enterprise. Their testimonies will help us assess the United States' leadership in weather forecasting and modeling.

It's easy to see that weather data doesn't just help determine the day's clothing. It enhances our national economy and security by assisting long term decision making. There are serious economic and humanitarian implications to not being able to predict weather correctly or precisely, and we cannot afford to let the United States fall behind on the world stage.

From my conversations with farmers back home in Ohio, I know that seasonal weather predictions are vital to American agriculture. Without accurate predictions in this sector, planting and harvesting is put at major risk.

Weather is also critical to the insurance industry and how to best insure homes from Cleveland to Wooster. And last but certainly not least, modeling and forecasting is crucial to all aspects of manufacturing – from planning around supply chain constraints for peak production to determining the safest transportation routes for the final product.

The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss the impacts of the Weather Act of 2017 and the Weather Act Reauthorization of 2023 in bolstering U.S. competitiveness in the global weather community. We'll also discuss the coordination and collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, and academia to implement programs that advance new technologies related to data assimilation and modeling.

Whether the data comes from NOAA, state services, or commercial providers, we must ensure that all tools at our disposal are used to make the public aware of extreme weather conditions.

The United States faces the unique challenge of having some of the widest variety of weather events in the world.

Just last week, the Smokehouse Creek fire in the Texas panhandle and southwestern Oklahoma grew to over a million acres in a matter of days. At the same time, Northen California was hit by a massive blizzard, which dumped feet of snow on some areas and blew gusts of wind over 100 miles per hour. In my home state of Ohio, there were 9 confirmed tornado touchdowns on February 28 alone.

Through innovation to improve the accuracy and timeliness of weather models, as well as public awareness, we can save lives and property at risk from these events.

Today we will identify actionable items NOAA can pursue to build trust and education in weather forecasting products. When an EF-4 tornado or a wildfire is bearing down on U.S. citizens, there should be no doubt on the accuracy of the models and what the best course of action is.

Additionally, by working together and increasing partnerships between NOAA and the commercial sector, the "users" of weather data will be better equipped to strengthen both short- and long-term weather predictions, benefitting Americans across all sectors.

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