



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Environment Subcommittee Hearing
*An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Budget Proposal
for Fiscal Year 2025*

June 4, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Miller, and thank you Administrator Spinrad for being here.

I'm pleased to say that this is our first NOAA related hearing since the overwhelmingly bipartisan passage of the Weather Act Reauthorization on the House Floor. I'll repeat the same sentiment I said at that time: I cannot stress enough how crucial it is to invest in our country's weather system.

That is why I'm extremely disappointed after reviewing NOAA's proposed budget. In the Weather Act Reauthorization, we place additional responsibilities on the Weather and Air Chemistry Research programs within the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and increase authorizations for those programs. 394 Members of Congress voted in support of this effort.

This budget takes the opposite approach and decreases the funding for the OAR office and the Weather and Air Chemistry Research programs.

Yes, the budget request is simply a request. At the end of the day, Congress controls the purse strings. But the budget request is also a message to all stakeholders and industry, and NOAA's message is this: the need for improved early and accurate forecasting of severe weather is not a priority of this Administration.

I'm also disappointed to see yet another proposed decrease in funding for the National Mesonet Program (NMP) and a continued plan to flat fund Commercial Data Purchases (CDP).

These two programs are golden examples of how NOAA can supplement and even improve their weather data inventory with cheaper, flexible industry efforts. Instead of supporting these programs, NOAA is requesting significant increases to the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) in order to build out federal satellite constellations.

While that is an admirable goal, and I support ensuring our next generation of satellites avoid gaps that could affect NOAA's ability in weather forecasting, it shouldn't come at the cost of decreasing commercial data.

As Chairman Miller pointed out, recent supplemental appropriations bills have ensured NOAA's coffers are well stocked. It would seem logical to annually bolster programs like the NMP and CDP and use one-time influxes for keeping large projects on budget and on schedule. Additionally, it seems prudent to test the usefulness of commercial data *before* having NOAA try to collect data on their own through expensive buildouts and federally owned instruments.

I sincerely hope this hearing gives us the opportunity to hear NOAA's justification for their budget decisions, as well as detailed updates on how they are using the billions of dollars currently at the agency. I look forward to continuing to work with you, Administrator Spinrad, and I yield back the balance of my time.