

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Statement of Vice-Chairman Frank Lucas (R-Okla.)

Markup of: H.R.1561, the *Weather Research and Forecast Innovation Act of 2015*

Vice-Chairman Lucas: Thank you Chairman Smith for bringing this important legislation to markup. H.R. 1561, “The Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2015,” will prioritize the protection of lives and property at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through focusing research and computing resources on improved weather forecasting, quantitative observing data planning, next generation modeling, and an emphasis on research-to-operations technology transfer.

Severe weather routinely affects large portions of the United States, and as a representative from Oklahoma, I understand the need for improvement first hand. In 2013, the deadly tornadoes in my home state were a stark reminder that we can do better to predict severe weather events and provide longer lead times to protect Americans in harm’s way.

The United States needs a world-class weather prediction system that helps protect the American people and their property. Unfortunately, for the last few years, our leadership in weather forecasting has slipped and we now play second fiddle to the European forecasting offices, who often predict America’s weather better than we can. The bill before us today will help us reclaim superior weather prediction and forecasting capabilities. Our citizens deserve this.

H.R. 1561 makes clear that NOAA will prioritize weather research and protect lives and property through a focused, affordable, attainable, and forward-looking research plan at the agency’s Research Office. The bill also helps encourage innovations and new capabilities developed through NOAA’s Weather Research Program by creating a joint technology transfer fund in the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. This transfer is essential to get new forecasting, models, and technologies out of the research side of NOAA and into our operational forecasts.

I am proud that this legislation has a dedicated Tornado Warning Improvement Program. The goal of this program is to reduce the loss of life from tornadoes by advancing the understanding of fundamental meteorological science allowing detection and notifications that are more accurate, effective, and timely. Constituents in my home state will benefit greatly from longer tornado warning lead times, which will definitely save their lives and better protect their property.

Finally, this bill encourages NOAA to actively consider new commercial data and private sector solutions to further enhance our weather forecasting capabilities. This legislation includes a pilot project, which will provide NOAA a clear and credible demonstration of the valuable data from commercial technologies available today.

This legislation is substantially similar to last year's bipartisan "Weather Forecasting Improvement Act," which passed the House by voice vote. The bill before us today updates authorization numbers to reflect current spending levels, adjusts dates to reflect the current operating status, and incorporates minor additions and technical changes to improve the bill's clarity and intent.

This legislation is the result of a bipartisan agreement last year and again now. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma, Environment Subcommittee Chairman Bridenstine, for his active leadership on this issue last Congress and getting us here today. I also thank the Ranking Member of the Environment Subcommittee, the gentlewoman from Oregon, Ms. Bonamici for her efforts in crafting a bipartisan agreement and joining in this most worthwhile initiative.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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