

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



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**Statement of Rep. Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.)
Hearing on “Restoring U.S. Leadership in Weather Forecasting part 2”**

Rep. Bridenstine: Let me begin by saying how truly and honored and proud I am just to be here. This is my first hearing as the vice-chairman of the Subcommittee on the Environment, and recent events have made me even more appreciative of the opportunities we as a committee will have to do important work for the American people over the next 18 months.

As every Oklahoman knows, tornadoes are an unavoidable challenge faced by millions of Americans. But we know equally well that every minute we can add to our tornado detection and alert systems has a direct effect on the number of lives that can be saved.

As the subcommittee with jurisdiction over the agency responsible for weather research and prediction - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA - I believe we have a moral obligation to advance legislation to the full House that forces NOAA to place its highest priority on what is undoubtedly its most important duty: enhancing public safety through timely and accurate forecasts of severe weather systems.

To implement these much needed reforms, I have recently introduced the Weather Forecasting Improvement Act of 2013. This legislation would establish within NOAA a Tornado Warning Extension Program aimed at improving the average time for a tornado warning from a few minutes to an hour or more. NOAA itself has indicated that this is a worthy and achievable goal, but sufficient resources and a dedicated effort is needed to make it a reality. My legislation aims to accomplish this not by requesting or spending any new funds at NOAA, but rather by shifting their priorities and resources away from lower priority climate and ocean research and towards weather forecasting research and innovation.

The inadequacy of attention to potentially life-saving advances in weather forecasting is evidenced by the fact that NOAA’s research arm currently spends more than three times as much on climate change research than it does on weather forecasting research. Across all government agencies, the difference in these misplaced priorities can be measured in the billions of dollars. Today’s hearing is an important step towards the legislative solution needed to fix this problem.

Finally, I want to thank Acting Administrator Sullivan and all of our witnesses for appearing today, and extend a particularly warm welcome to Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, who will be joining the second panel. Dr. Droegemeier has been an invaluable resource both for my office and the staff of the Science Committee as we have developed this legislation, and I thank him for making the trip from the University of Oklahoma today to lend his perspective and answer questions from our committee.

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