

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



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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)**

*Advancing Commercial Weather Data: Collaborative Efforts to Improve Forecasts, Part II*

**Chairman Smith:** Good Morning and I thank our witness for being here today to discuss a crucial issue that is important to all of us and also to my constituents. Severe weather routinely affects large portions of the United States. This year we already have seen the devastating effects of tornados across our country, especially in Texas and Oklahoma. My home state of Texas also has seen record breaking flooding that caused widespread damage and loss of life in my district.

These events are stark reminders that we depend heavily on the accuracy and timeliness of our weather forecasts. Unfortunately, our expertise has slipped in severe weather forecasting. Also of concern is that the large satellite programs we rely on for our forecast data are at risk of not meeting crucial schedule commitments.

Delayed satellite launches would dramatically reduce our ability to predict weather and issue accurate and timely forecasts. We must do everything we can to save lives and protect property from severe weather events.

This past May, the House of Representatives passed a bill that I co-sponsored, H.R. 1561, “The Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2015.” This bill greatly improves our severe weather forecasting capabilities. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma, Mr. Bridenstine, for his involvement with this bill, and Ranking Member Bonamici for co-sponsoring this legislation.

This bill prioritizes weather research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) research agency. It prompts NOAA to actively acquire new commercial data and seek private sector weather solutions through a commercial weather data pilot project. It also increases forecast warning lead times for tornadoes and hurricanes. And it creates a joint technology transfer fund in NOAA’s Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research to help put technologies developed through NOAA’s weather research into operation.

In this year’s Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill, the House also approved my amendment to fully fund these crucial weather-related research activities at NOAA. The enhanced prediction of severe weather events is of great importance in protecting the public from injury and loss of property.

It is something that Texans, and people in any community recently affected by severe weather, can appreciate. It is time for us to bring our weather forecasting systems into the 21st century. I look forward to our discussion today about how we can continue to support and enhance our weather prediction capabilities.

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