



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Gabe Amo (D-RI)
of the Subcommittee on Environment**

Environment Subcommittee Hearing:

*Protecting Lives and Property: Harnessing Innovative Technologies to Enhance Weather
Forecasting*
July 16th, 2025

Thank you, Chair Franklin, for convening today's hearing on how innovative technologies can strengthen weather forecasting and protect communities across the country. I also want to thank our witnesses for joining us, especially given the rescheduling of this hearing.

This hearing comes at a devastating time. Just last week, catastrophic flooding struck Texas, New Mexico, and North Carolina. Texas lost at least 134 lives, 37 of whom were children, and at least 101 people remain missing. In New Mexico, a man and two children, ages 7 and 4, were killed. Tropical Storm Chantal, and at least 2 tornadoes, hit North Carolina with one woman confirmed dead.

Entire families were lost. Livelihoods destroyed. Communities shattered. To the families grieving unimaginable loss, and to the first responders still working through the wreckage, our hearts are with you.

Unfortunately, this won't be the last disaster we face. Climate change is accelerating extreme weather, and we must do more to prepare our communities. We need to confront a hard truth: the United States cannot lead in weather prediction, cannot harness innovation, and cannot protect lives and property — without people.

Meteorologists who issue forecasts and warnings. Hydrologists who model flood risks. Climate scientists who analyze long-term trends. Data analysts and modelers who improve forecast accuracy. Emergency managers who translate forecasts into action. Dedicated public servants, many represented here today, who work around the clock, ensuring our communities are warned and protected in real time. These experts are the backbone of America's weather enterprise. But this Administration is taking a sledgehammer to that backbone.

On May 2nd, five former directors of the National Weather Service wrote to President Trump with a warning: "Our worst nightmare is that forecast offices will be so understaffed that there will be needless loss of life." This administration has already haphazardly gutted 15% of the National Weather Service's workforce. These were career public servants. Scientists and forecasters. People who devoted their lives to keeping Americans safe. Now the remaining staff are being asked to do the impossible: operate at full capacity, with reduced numbers, during an above-average Atlantic hurricane season. It's unacceptable. We are flying blind into the eye of the storm. We're already seeing the consequences. While it's too early to draw final conclusions

about the tragic flooding in Texas, early reporting suggests that staff shortages in local weather forecasting offices may have impaired coordination with local officials.

In the San Angelo forecasting office, critical positions were vacant, including the meteorologist-in-charge, senior hydrologist, and staff forecaster. Nearby, San Antonio's forecasting office lacked a warning coordination meteorologist and science officer. These aren't optional roles. These are lifesaving roles. We need a fully staffed and well-resourced National Weather Service. Not just to help predict storms, but to help communities prepare, coordinate emergency response, and warn Americans when minutes matter.

And yet, even in the face of growing disasters, Trump's proposed 2026 budget would: Eliminate funding for NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, including climate, weather, and ocean labs and cooperative institutes, such as those serving on our witness panel today, slash NOAA's workforce by an additional 17%, And extract over \$1.8 billion from its current budget, weakening the core services Americans rely on.

Thankfully, it seems like Congressional appropriators care more about protecting Americans from extreme weather than President Trump. This is playing out in real time back in Rhode Island. Last year, we celebrated the groundbreaking of the new Marine Operations Center, a nearly \$150 million investment in NOAA's research fleet and Rhode Island's blue economy. But with the hiring freeze still in place, there's no guarantee it will be staffed when it opens. That's not efficiency – its waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars.

That's why last week, Ranking Member Lofgren and I demanded Secretary Lutnick testify before this Committee. The staffing crisis at the National Weather Service is a public safety threat. We need answers, and more importantly, we need a plan.

Today, let's not talk about innovation in the abstract. Let's talk about what it takes to make that innovation real: investment in data, commitment to people, and trust in science. Let's protect lives and property, not just in name, but in practice.

Thank you. I yield back.