



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

Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:  
*A Task of EPIC Proportions: Reclaiming U.S. Leadership in Weather Modeling  
and Prediction*

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Thank you, Chair Fletcher.

We have had many discussions this Congress, and Congresses in the past, about the importance of accurate and timely weather forecasts.

Weather forecasting is complex and relies on first collecting as many observations and data as possible that are then assimilated into cutting edge weather models that are tested and verified. NOAA, the lead civilian agency for operational weather forecasting, participates in all aspects of this process, including the development of our weather models. Despite being at the forefront of the development of numerical weather prediction, the accuracy of U.S. forecasts and numerical weather prediction has fallen behind that of other countries. But this isn't just a matter of pride; accurate weather forecasts save lives and protect property.

We recently had a devastating tornado touch down in Dallas that ripped through densely populated areas of the Metroplex in and near my district. Fortunately, there were no deaths or severe injuries related to this outbreak, but the tornadoes did cause an estimated \$2 billion in property damage.

Timely forecasts, watches, and warnings from the National Weather Service were instrumental to keeping Texans safe during this tornado outbreak. Thank you to Dr. Jacobs and the dedicated employees at NOAA and the National Weather Service for their great work in protecting Americans every day.

As Texans, Chair Fletcher and I are very familiar with extreme weather events, as are Ranking Members Lucas and Marshall. This Committee held a hearing earlier this year on how to improve the understanding and forecasting of extreme weather events in a changing climate. Many of the witnesses at that hearing shared that leveraging the capabilities and resources of our robust weather enterprise through a community approach would be critical to addressing extreme weather forecasting challenges. NOAA's Earth Prediction Innovation Center, or EPIC, has the

potential to support the goal of regaining U.S. leadership in global weather forecasting through a community driven approach.

The Weather Research and Forecasting and Innovation Act of 2017 was a significant step toward improving weather forecasting. This was followed by the National Integrated Drought Information System, or NIDIS Reauthorization Act of 2018 that amended the Weather Act and authorized EPIC at NOAA.

It is vital for Congress to conduct oversight of federal programs that we have authorized to ensure they are being implemented as Congress intended. Hearings like this are important if we are to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. I am looking forward to hearing from a broad group of stakeholders from the weather community this afternoon on how we can leverage a program like EPIC to achieve a common goal of improving our weather forecasts to better protect our constituents.

Thank you and I yield back.