

Floor Statement  
**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

H.R. 353, the “*Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017*”  
April 4, 2017

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 353, the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017.

Climate and weather are not fundamentally partisan concerns—they affect all of our constituents, regardless of their party affiliation. The bill we are considering today, which is the culmination of more than four years of bi-partisan compromise and negotiation, demonstrates what can be accomplished if we work together to address the concerns of our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, weather affects all of us each and every day. It is a constant presence in our lives. Extreme weather events, which are becoming more severe and more frequent, are damaging lives and property in my home state of Texas, across the continental U.S., and all the way to the islands of Hawaii.

Sadly, the devastation caused by tornadoes, hurricanes, and other severe weather incidents has become a far too familiar occurrence for far too many Americans. It should go without saying that we need to help Americans avoid and cope with these potentially devastating events, by utilizing the very best weather forecasting and warning capabilities.

In that regard, the National Weather Service and the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research at NOAA play a central role in protecting the lives and property of every American. H.R. 353 will help accelerate innovation that NOAA can make use of, turning cutting-edge weather research into essential weather forecasting tools and products; tools that forecasters can then use to protect American lives.

The legislation improves collaboration and cooperation within NOAA, and removes barriers that exist between the weather research community, our nation’s forecasters, and the private-sector weather enterprise. Improving these relationships will strengthen the accuracy and timing of our weather predictions and ultimately will save lives and make our communities safer.

H.R. 353 also reauthorizes NOAA’s tsunami warning activities. Communities along our western coasts are particularly impacted by the threat of tsunamis. While this bill reauthorizes tsunami warning and research activities at NOAA, it does so at a level far below current Agency spending. Such a cut makes little sense. Even in a tough fiscal climate, we should be wary of cuts to programs that negatively affect our ability to protect American lives and property from natural disasters.

I want to applaud Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici for her fight to retain funding for these programs at their current level, and hope that we can work together with our colleagues to maintain current tsunami funding when it comes time for appropriations.

Mr. Speaker, strengthening our resilience to severe weather events is both vital and necessary to strengthen our nation's economic security. H.R. 353 will advance our weather forecasting capabilities, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.