

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Committee on Science, Space, & Technology  
Subcommittee on Environment  
*“Private Sector Weather Forecasting: Assessing Products and Technologies”*  
June 8, 2016

People in Texas are very familiar with the impact weather has on our daily lives. In just the last few weeks, terrible floods have taken the lives of more than a dozen people. Weather has a universal impact and it is only through reliable and accurate forecasts that we are able to act to protect ourselves. That is why the mission of the National Weather Service is to “provide weather, water, and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy.” So while this hearing is part of an ongoing dialogue regarding the role of the commercial weather industry in our weather enterprise, we must keep in mind that the protection of our citizens and national security are inherently government functions.

That is why, in 2003, the National Academies “Fair Weather Report” provided recommendations of how to strengthen the existing partnership between the Weather Service, academia, and the private sector, and not simply strip away government functions as some may suggest. Despite the claims by some that we must “disaggregate” the weather enterprise, it is very clear to me that the existing partnership between these three sectors has made our weather forecasts more reliable and more accurate.

We will hear from some of the witnesses that NWS should focus on its “core” functions, and let private companies handle the rest. However, if weather data collection and weather forecasting are not “core” functions of the NWS, I don’t know what is. As we must work to ensure that NWS’s forecasts are as accurate and timely as possible, we need to make sure that NWS has the resources and mandate to do so.

It should be noted that NWS weather data has enabled the growth of a significant “value-added” industry. There may be ways that the private sector can complement and support NWS’s mission, but I am very skeptical that transferring NWS’s responsibilities to the private sector is either wise or necessary, and I do not support doing so.

Finally, I would have hoped the Majority would have invited NOAA and the Weather Service to participate at this hearing. I look forward to hearing their perspective at another time.