

OPENING STATEMENT
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Of the Subcommittee on Environment

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

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I would like to start by congratulating Dr. Busalacchi who will soon be the President of the University Corporation of Atmospheric Research, later this summer.

Today’s hearing is an opportunity to hear about the successes of the private weather industry, learn about the impressive weather research being conducted at academic institutions, and recognize the critical role that the National Weather Service has played, and will continue to play, in ensuring the strength and continuity of the entire American weather enterprise.

The three sectors that make up the weather enterprise – private, public, and academic – work collectively to meet the needs of the public, inspire growth and innovation, and protect life and property. To maintain the progress we have made over the last decade, we must explore opportunities to leverage expertise across these sectors. More can be done by NOAA and the Weather Service to strengthen this partnership and keep us on a path of serving the public even better.

If, however, Congress were to reduce the role of one sector, or shift responsibilities without considering how such a change might affect the entire enterprise, we risk upsetting the balance and losing the progress so many have worked so hard to achieve.

In 2003, the National Academies released their seminal report on the weather partnership, “Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services”, and their recommendations state that continued success requires recognizing the core missions of each partner.

The core mission of the National Weather Service is to provide weather forecasts and warnings to protect life and property, and to enhance our national economy. The NWS network includes thousands of forecasters, across hundreds of forecast offices, who support the critical infrastructure of observing, data processing, prediction, and dissemination systems. Research taking place at our academic institutions advances the science needed to make forecasts more accurate, while inspiring the next generation of meteorologists. The private sector has the ability to use both research and NWS data to tailor exciting new products to meet the changing demands of a diverse set of end-users and consumers.

Although some advocate for disaggregating the current structure, I am confident that the weather enterprise is stronger together.

In the 13 years since the release of the Fair Weather Report, the weather partnership has flourished and the state of U.S. weather forecasting is strong. Although we should always look for ways to improve, we must do so in ways that strengthen each partner, and not diminish any of the key roles. I look forward to the discussion today about how we can accomplish that goal.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.