



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**  
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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**Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.)**  
*Private Sector Weather Forecasting: Assessing Products and Technologies*

**Chairman Bridenstine:** Good morning and welcome to this morning's Environment Subcommittee hearing entitled "*Private Sector Weather Forecasting: Assessing Products and Technologies.*" I'd like to first thank our witnesses for being here today.

The American weather enterprise is made up of stakeholders that provide services which ultimately save lives and property. Among these are private sector weather forecasting companies that over the years have become a major source of weather information. Today we have companies that specialize in sector specific forecasting, as well as companies which create their own forecasts that are disseminated to millions of Americans.

The services they provide are essential to protecting Americans in the face of severe weather. This is particularly important to me as my constituents in Oklahoma face some of the most severe weather in the country. Providing them advanced warnings is critical. I look forward to hearing about the advances made by private sector weather companies working on the forefront to protect lives and property.

NOAA currently provides important data which is then utilized by other stakeholders to construct forecasts. Many private sector companies also use their own methods and technologies to enhance this data.

To me, there is a clear delineation here. NOAA should focus on providing the foundational datasets that others utilize to produce life-saving forecasts, rather than duplicating efforts and technologies that are employed or could be employed by the private sector.

As an example, a main tenant of H.R. 1561, the Lucas – Bridenstine Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act, is its recognition of the role commercial weather data can play as a piece of the solutions available to NOAA. In the face of looming data gaps, we need to maintain continuous, efficient, robust, and cost-effective data streams to feed the initial conditions of our numerical weather prediction models.

This subcommittee has a long history of oversight of NOAA's satellite programs, which over the years have been plagued with cost-overruns, delays, and mismanagement. This has underscored my belief that we need to augment our space-based observing systems by incorporating alternative methods of data collection.

Earlier this year before this subcommittee, NOAA Administrator Kathy Sullivan testified to the ability of the private sector to produce weather data. She testified that “in the weather domain, we believe it is a promising but still quite nascent prospect to actually have data flows from private sector satellites.” Today, I am pleased to have one of the many private sector satellite companies before us to discuss their perspectives on commercial weather data.

I was encouraged by NOAA’s budget request this year for commercial weather, which includes funding to continue the Commercial Weather Data Pilot program authorized by our House-passed weather bill. This pilot program is an important signal to the private sector that NOAA is interested in new and innovative sources of data.

Likewise, I was also encouraged to see NOAA incorporate a line item for the purchase of radio occultation data as a potential alternative to another constellation of COSMIC satellites.

The Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill supports both these initiatives, and I’d like to thank my colleagues on that committee, particularly Chairman Culberson.

In light of these directions from Congress, I look forward to following up with NOAA to find out how these decisions will be made.

I look forward to an in depth discussion today about how private sector data and products can build on the foundation provided by NOAA to help enhance the safety of Americans. I now recognize the gentlewoman from Oregon, the ranking member, Ms. Bonamici for an opening statement.

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