

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

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May 17, 2012

The Honorable John Bryson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
and NOAA Administrator  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Bryson and Administrator Lubchenco:

Last year the Committee learned of funding irregularities within the National Weather Service (NWS). These issues centered on whether NWS reallocated funds without congressional approval. After initial inquiries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff indicated that a preliminary review was conducted last fall, and that an additional review led by senior NOAA and Department of Commerce (DOC) leadership would report its findings in January. Unfortunately, NOAA and the DOC still have not finalized their review or updated the Committee on the status of this review. By this letter, I request that you, or your staff, provide the Committee staff with a briefing on the status of this review.

Prior to this briefing, please provide a copy of the latest draft report produced by the reviewers. Providing the Committee with a preliminary update on the status of this senior-level review is not premature, as a preliminary review was already conducted last fall by NWS, and it is our understanding that personnel actions have already been taken. In addition to the underlying issue, the Committee is now concerned that this review is being purposefully delayed. An update, and continued cooperation from both NOAA and DOC, would allay many of those fears.

This is a serious matter that demands both NOAA and DOC cooperation. Recent press reports indicated that "top officials at the National Weather Service reallocated about \$50 million without required congressional approval."<sup>1</sup> This same report also indicated that the amount may

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Yehle, "Agency Investigates Weather Service's Budget Movement," E&E News Greenwire, Feb. 27, 2012, available at: <http://www.eenews.net/Greenwire/print/2012/02/27/5>.

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be as high as \$100 million, and that this could be between five and ten percent of the NWS budget.

As the Administration continues to sacrifice weather forecasting for other NOAA priorities, this misallocation could have a significant impact on lives and property. Notwithstanding the President's unfortunate use of weather forecasting and weather satellites for political purposes,<sup>2</sup> the Administration's fiscal year 2013 request for NWS is \$972.2 million, a decrease of \$19.7 million, or 2 percent below FY 2012 levels.<sup>3</sup> This translates to a budget that would "remove one employee from each of the 122 weather forecasting offices."<sup>4</sup>

I would appreciate scheduling this briefing as soon as possible. Please have your staff contact Raj Bharwani on the Investigations & Oversight Subcommittee to discuss mutually convenient dates for the week of May 21, 2012. Mr. Bharwani can be reached at (202) 225-6371.

Sincerely,



Rep. Paul Broun, MD  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Investigations  
and Oversight

cc: Rep. Paul Tonko  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Investigations  
and Oversight

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<sup>2</sup> Real Clear Politics, "Obama Warns GOP Budget Would Make Weather Prediction Less Accurate," April 3, 2012, available at:  
[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/03/obama\\_warns\\_gop\\_budget\\_would\\_make\\_weather\\_prediction\\_less\\_accurate.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/03/obama_warns_gop_budget_would_make_weather_prediction_less_accurate.html).

<sup>3</sup> National Weather Service FY 2013 Budget Highlights, available at:  
[http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/nbo/fy13\\_budget\\_highlights/NWS\\_FY13\\_One\\_Pager.pdf](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/nbo/fy13_budget_highlights/NWS_FY13_One_Pager.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Emily Yehle, "Agencies face downsizing, significant personnel shift in Obama budget," E&E News Greenwire, Feb. 15, 2012, available at: <http://www.eenews.net/public/Greenwire/2012/02/15/3>.