

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## H.R. 2413, THE WEATHER FORECASTING IMPROVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 1, 2014*

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2413, the Weather Forecasting Improvement Act. This bill represents a bipartisan agreement by members of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. I am pleased to join my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the bill's sponsor, Mr. BRIDENSTINE, subcommittee Chair SCHWEIKERT, the former subcommittee Chair STEWART, and Chair SMITH, in support of this bill. I want to thank them, as well as Ranking Member JOHNSON, for their work on this important bill.

Members on both sides of the aisle can be assured that this bill represents a truly bipartisan effort, and is built on extensive discussions with, and advice from, the weather community.

After the devastating tornadoes in his district, Mr. BRIDENSTINE introduced a well-intended bill that went a long way toward improving the tools available to NOAA for evaluating emerging forecast technologies. His emphasis on tornado research was appropriate and helpful. At the Subcommittee markup, Mr. GRAYSON added a valuable amendment for a focused hurricane research program.

Mr. STEWART, then the Chairman of the Environment Subcommittee, worked with my staff and me on an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to add to the tools and programs in the original bill.

We drew on expert advice from the weather enterprise and from extensive reports from the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Public Administration. Experts told us that to improve weather forecasting, the research at the Office of Oceans and Atmospheric Research (OAR) and the forecasting at the National Weather Service had to be better coordinated; this legislation contains provisions to improve that coordination.

This bill encourages NOAA to integrate research and operations in a way that models the successful innovation structure used by the Department of Defense.

The bill we are considering today also creates numerous opportunities for the broader weather community to provide insights to NOAA.

At every opportunity, we charge the agency to consult with the American weather industry and researchers as they develop research plans and undertake new initiatives. We also press NOAA to get serious about exploring private sector solutions to their data needs.

The bill makes clear that we expect the historical support for extramural research to continue. The engine of weather forecasting innovation has not always been found within

NOAA, but often is found in the external research community and labs that work with NOAA. That collaboration must and will continue under this legislation.

In addition, the bill includes an explicit focus on tapping the expertise of social scientists in how to best communicate risks and warnings to the public. Witnesses who came before the Science Committee emphasized the importance of this work.

The best forecasting skill and technology in the world won't be as effective unless the messages to the public result in the right safety-response.

The bill before us today is designed to improve public safety, enhance the American economy, and transform the innovation culture at NOAA. I am confident that its passage will improve weather forecasting and tangibly benefit our constituents.

I can assure all Members that weather research is strengthened in this bill, but not at the expense of other important work at NOAA.

During the committee process we heard from witness after witness who stressed that weather forecasting involves many different scientific disciplines, and this integrated, multidisciplinary approach reflects an understanding that we cannot choose to strengthen one area of research at OAR without endangering the progress in the other areas because they are all interconnected. Physical and chemical laws do not respect OAR's budgeting boundaries of climate, weather, and oceans and this bill does not step beyond addressing organizational issues in weather at NOAA.

I want to be clear about what this bill does and does not do, because there seems to be some confusion on the Hill and elsewhere. There is no question that the bill as introduced threatened NOAA's ability to make expert judgments about how to distribute research support among climate, weather, and oceans work. The original language of H.R. 2413 would have required that weather-related activities be the "top priority" across all NOAA offices. This clearly would have put weather at the front of the line in budget and planning efforts compared to oceans or climate.

That language raised significant concerns for Members on my side of the aisle, in part because there was no hearing record to support such a reordering of programs. On the contrary, the testimony we received reflected consensus that such direction would be counter-productive, and would not substantively improve weather forecasting.

In light of that record, and the real goal of the bill's original sponsors to have a bipartisan bill, Chairman STEWART and Mr. BRIDENSTINE agreed to accept a change in that language to simply direct NOAA to "prioritize" weather-related work. Instead of a value statement that puts weather in front of all other initiatives, we adopted a neutral process statement. This language was discussed with NOAA, and my staff and my Democratic colleagues on the committee were satisfied with their response. In other words, setting priorities is what the

agency does in its strategic plans, annual performance plans, and budgets.

The language in the bill before us today instructs NOAA to prioritize, a process that is already in place. The legislative record is clear on this subject. The Committee abandoned a value direction to the agency and instead adopted a simple process direction.

My willingness to support the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute and the underlying bill, and to recommend that colleagues on my side of the aisle do the same, was based in part on conversations with NOAA reflecting their understanding that the shift away from "Top Priority" represented a significant improvement to the legislation. I would not support legislation that sought to make weather forecasting superior to other areas of work at OAR, and the weather community would not support that either. Witnesses from across that community were very articulate on the interconnected nature of work in these three budgeting areas at NOAA. Proof that the minority would not support language that placed weather research in front of climate or oceans research can easily be found in our unanimous opposition to the original version of this bill, which moved through the subcommittee on a partisan vote. Only after the prioritization issue was addressed were minority committee members willing to support the bill.

Although H.R. 2413 does not reprioritize funding from climate or oceans research to weather research, the bill does include some reprioritization across weather programs at NOAA. The most significant financial move is shifting the technology transfer program and account from the National Weather Service to NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

There is reprioritization within OAR, it can all be found in how the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research lays out its own weather research effort. For example, the bill puts in place a clear process that ties the needs of forecasters at the National Weather Service to the research initiatives at OAR.

On the question of funding for weather research, I remind my colleagues that the total amount requested for weather and forecasting research at NOAA in the FY2015 budget is \$207 million. In addition to the \$84 million requested for OAR weather research, another \$123 million was requested for science and technology at the National Weather Service. This exceeds the amount requested for climate research by \$19 million.

As I have stated previously, expert witnesses testifying on this matter emphasized that improving weather forecasting accuracy requires prioritizing into oceans and climate. The physics and chemistry of these three areas makes them interconnected in a way that budgeting obscures.

Weather is defined as what happens in the atmosphere in any 14-day period. Droughts and tropical storm seasons are driven by longer-term processes, well beyond 14 days. The severe weather phenomena that have been ravaging our country in recent years are

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climatic events that are the result of processes that can be measured in seasons and even years.

Ocean and climate research undoubtedly support weather forecasting improvement. Similarly, understanding short-term phenomena—weather—has implications for oceans and climate. The bill as amended reflects this understanding.

Thank you, again, to Chair SMITH and Ranking Member JOHNSON for giving us the support to work out a compromise. And I want reiterate my thanks to Mr. BRIDENSTINE for his willingness to work with us and accept changes to the original bill.

Mr. Speaker, weather is not a partisan issue. The American public needs and deserves the best weather forecasting system we can provide.

This bill has broad support in the weather community among research institutions, established businesses, and emerging companies. Supporters include: The American Commercial Space Weather Association, University Consortium for Atmospheric Research, GeoOptics, Planet IQ, and The Weather Coalition.

I particularly want to thank Mr. STEWART, the former Chair of the Environment Subcommittee, whose attitude throughout the process was collaborative and constructive, allowing us to arrive at the bipartisan bill we have before us today. Chair SCHWEIKERT, who took on the Chairmanship of the Subcommittee when Mr. STEWART went to the Committee on Appropriations, has brought with him that same collaborative spirit. And finally, thank you to all of the very hardworking staff on both sides of the aisle.

In summary, this bill does not reallocate money from oceans or climate to weather research, I would not support a bill that did that. What the bill does do is to launch some new management processes designed to give taxpayers a better return on their investment while opening the door to exploring commercial opportunities that could reduce costs at NOAA. This bill can drive meaningful cultural change at NOAA, harvest the benefits of research tied to operational needs, and accomplish that without significant spending increases.

This legislation will make real and measurable improvements in weather research and weather forecasting. I urge my colleagues to support this effort, and to vote yes on this bill.

#### ROSS ARAGON TRIBUTE

#### HON. SCOTT R. TIPTON

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 7, 2014*

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Mr. Ross Aragon, a distinguished public servant from Pagosa Springs, CO. Mr. Aragon has served the town of Pagosa Springs for over 38 years, making him the longest serving town trustee and Mayor in the history of Colorado.

During his tenure as Mayor, Mr. Aragon was instrumental in improving the quality of police protection, expanding the town's boundaries by annexing the business corridor, expanding recreational programs and facilities, and establishing the parks and trail systems within the town. Additionally, under his leadership,

the town was included in the Pagosa Fire Protection District as well as the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District, resulting in domestic water being made available to town residents.

Not only has he tirelessly served the residents of Pagosa Springs, but he has served as a visionary seeking to expand geothermal energy by using the natural resources of his town. As a result, Mr. Aragon has played a key role in Pagosa Springs supporting and exploring geothermal energy for commercial use. One project that still engages his attention is the Pagosa Springs Geothermal Greenhouse Partnership. Through a unanimous vote of the Town Council led by Mr. Aragon, the town of Pagosa Springs is in partnership with various community residents in developing greenhouses for production of various agricultural products on permaculture principles. The geothermal greenhouse partnership will also serve as an avenue to educate the community on this viable green energy source and its many benefits.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor to recognize Mr. Aragon's tireless service to his community over these many years. I stand with the residents of the town of Pagosa Springs in saluting this remarkable man and congratulating him on a lifetime of service.

#### CELEBRATING THE ROCKFORD RESCUE MISSION'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

#### HON. ADAM KINZINGER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 7, 2014*

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise today in celebration of the Rockford Rescue Mission, which is set to celebrate its 50th Anniversary this May.

Mr. Ray Stewart rented a building in 1964 in downtown Rockford in order to establish the Rockford Rescue Mission. There was a sign on the door that read, "All are welcome here. The alcoholic, the addict, the stranger, the sojourner, the pilgrim, the poor. There is hope for all who enter here." This important work continues fifty years later and I am proud of the service they have provided to many constituents in Illinois' Sixteenth Congressional District.

The Rockford Rescue Mission is open twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year. They serve Rockford and the surrounding communities by providing prevention and recovery services for addiction, abuse, and destructive relations. They are also the primary provider for meals and shelter in northern Illinois and are able to provide these services with private donations from individuals, foundations, businesses, organizations, and churches. None of this would be possible without the tremendous help of the over 500 volunteers who contribute nearly 45,000 hours throughout the year.

During the Rockford Rescue Mission's 2013 fiscal year, they served over 160,000 meals, provided over 58,000 beds for lodging, distributed over 159,000 items, facilitated over 10,000 counseling sessions, and served over 2,500 clinic patients.

The City of Rockford and surrounding communities can take pride in the Rockford Res-

cue Mission which gives back to the community so willingly. I would like to congratulate all the volunteers who have helped this organization over the past fifty years and I encourage them to continue their important service.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Illinois' Sixteenth District of Illinois, I wish to express our appreciation for Rockford Rescue Mission's impressive service to the community and their diligent work.

#### RECOGNIZING 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WISCONSIN 4-H PROGRAM

#### HON. REID J. RIBBLE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 7, 2014*

Mr. RIBBLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of Wisconsin's 4-H Youth Development tradition. The very first meeting occurred on October 30th, 1914 in Walworth County in southeastern Wisconsin. 4-H stands for "Head, Heart, Hands and Health." There are 350,000 youth enrolled in my state's 4-H Youth Development program, and the 8th District is home to more than 13,000 of these exceptional young leaders.

4-H's slogan is "Learn by doing", and that is certainly true in Wisconsin. This partnership between the University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county government has a tremendous history of engaging youth to pursue excellence in the areas of leadership, citizenship and life-skills. The program offers youth experiences in large and small animal projects, dairy-related activities, tractor driving contests, different shooting sports and wildlife management. Wisconsin's 4-H Youth Development program has provided youth in rural and urban settings with a unique opportunity develop skills that will serve them well throughout their lifetimes.

As Congressman, I thank the many University of Wisconsin educators and volunteers that have contributed so much to this program over the last 100 years. As a proud Member of the House Agriculture Committee, I encourage residents in Northeast Wisconsin to celebrate this organization's rich history and tradition through the centennial events scheduled during the 2014 calendar year.

#### TRIBUTE TO BJORN BERG

#### HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 7, 2014*

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and recognize Bjorn Berg of US Bank in Des Moines, Iowa for being named a 2014 Forty Under 40 honoree by the award-winning central Iowa publication, Business Record.

Since 2000, Business Record has undertaken an exhaustive annual review to identify a standout group of young leaders in the Greater Des Moines area who are making an impact in their communities and their careers. Each year, forty up-and-coming community and business leaders under 40 years of age are selected for this prestigious distinction,