Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies

Dear Chair Rogers and Ranking Member Meng:

We respectfully request the Subcommittee support funding at a level of at least $656 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) within the FY 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations legislation. NOAA OAR research helps states manage their infrastructure, agricultural resources, fisheries, water resources, and natural disaster planning and response by increasing the effectiveness of environmental observations and modeling. We also request that any funding appropriated for this account be utilized as Congress has directed.

Recent reporting on the President's FY26 budget proposal shows that the Trump Administration plans to effectively eliminate OAR.[1] The proposal includes a $485 million cut to OAR's budget, which is a nearly 75 percent cut, and a directive to transfer any remaining research funding to other divisions of NOAA. The proposed budget would "eliminate all funding for climate, weather, and ocean laboratories and cooperative institutes." It also does not include funding for Regional Climate Data and Information, Climate Competitive Research, National Sea Grant College Program, or the National Oceanographic Partnership Program. This shortsighted and dangerous proposal would cripple United States (U.S.) leadership in scientific research and leave our communities less prepared to face extreme weather events. As hurricane season quickly approaches, OAR's advancements in predicting extreme weather events are more important than ever. The research and data resulting from the OAR Hurricane Research Division's partnership with the U.S. National Hurricane Center have saved countless lives and nearly $5 billion per major U.S. hurricane landfall.

Without OAR, NOAA would be unable to fulfill its core mission: to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; to share that knowledge and information with others; and to conserve and responsibly manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. Recent OAR research includes forecasting energy demand scenarios, wildfires, severe weather and storms; assessing local impacts of sea-level rise; improving seasonal precipitation and drought predictions; and understanding atmospheric rivers and other causes of extreme flooding. This research is translated for use by private businesses and public sector managers at all levels of government.

Approximately one-third of OAR's budget supports 16 Cooperative Institutes (CIs), i.e., partnerships among NOAA and university/ research institutions located across the United States.

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[1] Paul Voosen, "Trump Seeks to End Climate Research at Premier U.S. Climate Agency," *Science*, April 11, 2025, https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-seeks-end-climate-research-premier-u-s-climate-agency.

Established through open competitive solicitations, CIs provide NOAA with efficient access to innovations at the nation's primary institutions of scientific research, education, and progress, while maintaining the flexibility to adjust workforce capabilities with NOAA's evolving needs. These cooperative entities—already strained by budget cuts— are the very type of innovative partnerships the federal government should promote.

Additionally, OAR partners with colleges and universities around the country through the National Sea Grant College Program to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources and work with coastal communities to maintain a sustainable economy and environment. Other OAR programs cover short-term weather forecasting to longer-term atmospheric analysis. For example, OAR leads the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and supports the Climate Adaptation Partnerships program to help expand and build the nation's capacity to prepare for and adapt to variations in climate.
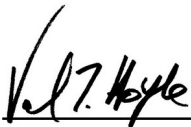
OAR also supports several NOAA laboratories. These include the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory in New Jersey, the Earth System Research Laboratory in Colorado, the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Washington, the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory in Florida, the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Michigan, the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Oklahoma, and the Air Resource Laboratory in Maryland. These laboratories support crucial needs from hurricane, tornado and flash flood forecasting to climate mitigation and adaptation for the whole of the nation.

With Europe already surpassing the United States in weather forecasting performance, OAR must maintain robust investments in data assimilation – an area of improvement that experts agree will help us restore our global standing. OAR's data assimilation efforts, including supporting the Joint Center for Satellite Data Assimilation, are essential for advancing forecasting and a next-generation, unified, open-source data assimilation system for the U.S. weather enterprise.
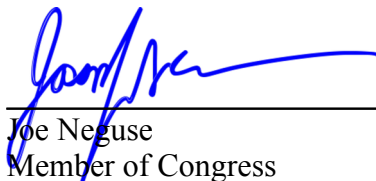
Stronger science for forecasting severe weather and communicating impacts will protect communities and save lives. Robust funding will enable NOAA and its research institution partners to continue their long and proud history of partnering with industries and other government agencies to provide that cutting-edge research.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you as the appropriations process continues.

Sincerely,
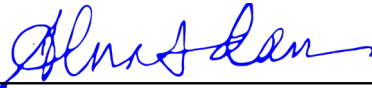
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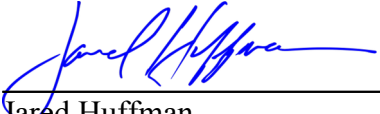
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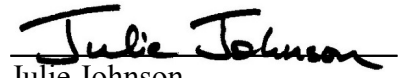Member of Congress

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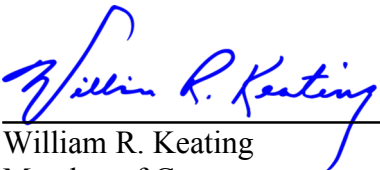
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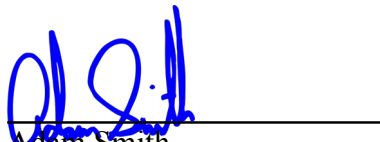
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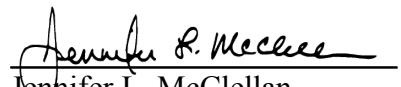
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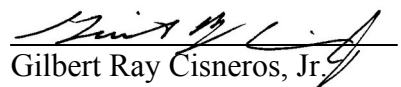
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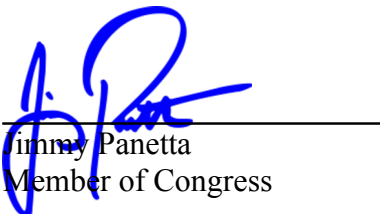
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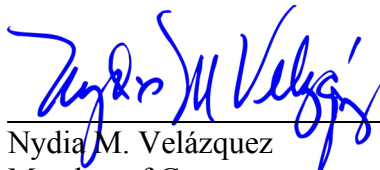Member of Congress

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