



*National Weather Service
Employees Organization*

FORECASTERS WARN OF CRIPPLING CUTS TO WEATHER SERVICES IN TUESDAY'S SENATE VOTE

Washington DC (October 9, 2009) - The union that represents the meteorologists at the National Weather Service warns that their ability to forecast the weather and warn of severe storms will be crippled if an amendment proposed by Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison is approved by the Senate next Tuesday, October 13, 2009. The Senate will vote on the issue on Tuesday when it reconvenes to finalize the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations for this fiscal year. "National Weather Service forecast offices are now at bare bones staffing and the current generation of weather satellites are past their life cycle. We are at a critical failure point and lives will be lost if we have to cut back on any of our staffing or infrastructure," said Dan Sobien, a Lead Forecaster at the Tampa, Florida Forecast Office and President of the National Weather Service Employees Organization.

The amendment at issue would cut funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration by \$172 million this year. The National Weather Service is the largest single agency within NOAA. The NWS and NOAA weather satellite programs will absorb most of the cuts. The funds would be diverted to the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program rather than being used to reduce the deficit. The Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill already includes \$228 million for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. If adopted, this amendment will increase funding for the program by

75% over what was approved by the Appropriations Committee.

The amendment will cut funding for the 122 National Weather Service Forecast Offices nationwide, the National Hurricane Center in Miami and the Severe Storms Prediction Center in Oklahoma, which issues warnings of severe thunderstorms and tornados. Due to current underfunding, there are only two forecasters on duty at most forecast offices - which may be responsible for issuing forecasts and severe weather warnings for one or more states - at any given time. The cuts will also set back the development and launch of the next generation of weather satellites, which is already three years overdue.

"The proposed increase in alien law enforcement programs would benefit primarily a handful of border states, but it will come at a cost of protecting the lives of the people of not only those states, but of the entire country. The United States has more diverse and severe weather than any country in the world. Thousands of lives are saved each year as a result of tornado, thunderstorm, hurricane and flood warnings issued by the National Weather Service," said Sobien.

For more information visit www.nwseo.org

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