



# The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

## **Congress approves restoration of funding for ITOs and NCEP Climate Prediction Center**

### **120 or more jobs saved by NWSEO legislative efforts**

(September 14, 2017) On Wednesday, the House of Representatives approved two amendments to the Commerce section of the Omnibus Appropriations Act which restored funding for the Information Technology Officers and the Climate Prediction Center, which had earlier been eliminated by the House Appropriations Committee as part of the President's budget. The amendments were offered by Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL) and Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) at NWSEO's request. The first amendment restored funding for the Information Technology Officers at each WFO. These positions have been the subject of annual proposed reductions, but this year is the first time the House Appropriations Committee approved elimination of the ITOs. The second amendment restored funding for the NWS's Climate Prediction Center. Earlier this summer, the Appropriations Committee approved the President's proposal to reduce funding and staff at the CPC, to eliminate the international seasonal forecasting that aids DOD and USAID in famine relief and food security, and to consolidate of the residual staff with the Weather Prediction Center at NCEP.

Over 1,000 amendments to the "Make American Secure and Prosperous Appropriations Act," which will fund the Department of Commerce and many other agencies in FY 2018, were introduced. Of those, only 224 amendments were approved by the House Rules Committee as "in order" and appropriate for floor consideration by the full House. Only a small number of those amendments were eventually approved by the House this week. The NWSEO amendments were approved as part of an "en bloc" package because NWSEO's lobbyist was able to obtain bi-partisan co-sponsorship of the amendments.

The Senate Appropriations Committee rejected these cuts earlier this year, so although a final Commerce Appropriations Act has not yet been approved by both Houses of Congress, the ITOs and the CPC positions appear safe for another year.

Here is the text of Representative Lipinski's remarks introducing his amendments on the floor:

*Mr. Lipinski: Mr. Chair, I rise in support of my two amendments included in the en bloc package being considered for Division C of H.R. 3354. I want to thank Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano for their leadership on this division, and for including these amendments in the en bloc package. These bipartisan amendments, cosponsored by me and my friend Mr. LoBiondo of New Jersey, protect critical functions at the National Weather Service. The Weather Service is essential to so much of what we do. From its critical functions like helping us predict, prepare for, and ride out extreme weather events to its everyday functions like telling us whether or not to carry an umbrella, life without up-to-date weather information is hard to imagine.*

*My first amendment (No. 89) directs the National Weather Service not to cut \$1.2 million from the Climate Prediction Center, one of its National Centers for Environmental Prediction. The Service is further directed not to consolidate the functions of the Climate Prediction Center into the Weather*

*Prediction Center. Keeping these two centers separate recognizes the essential and very different services each one provides. The medium and long-term predictions offered by the Climate Prediction Center are used for planning by diverse industries including transportation, agriculture, energy, and public health. Its global datasets are used by the Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development to understand international phenomena like flood and drought that could impact food supplies and regional stability.*

*My second amendment (No. 88) directs the National Weather Service not to cut \$10.1 million from its budget for Information Technology Officers, and to maintain an on-site IT Officer at each Weather Forecast Office. These officers do software maintenance, technical systems upgrades, and develop software and data products to meet local office needs. According to the Weather Service's assessment of its performance during Hurricane Matthew (2016), "[Weather Forecast Offices] were unanimous in their support of having a local [IT Officer] present to address issues before, during, and after hurricane season." In addition, a significant number of IT Officers are also trained, experienced meteorologists who can augment the forecasting staff during extreme weather.*

*I think all of my colleagues can agree that supporting the National Weather Service is more important now than ever and I urge support for these amendments and for the en bloc package.*