



*National Weather Service
Employees Organization*

NWSEO Speaking Points on the Thune Bill (S.1573)

- NWSEO strongly opposes the consolidation of 122 weather forecast offices to create six regional weather offices proposed in Senator Thune's (R-SD) bill on Tuesday.
- This will effectively closing all 122 local forecast offices across the country. All forecast and warning functions will be moved to the Regional Offices with the exception that one warning coordinating meteorologist will be left behind at each 122 forecast offices.
- The bill (S. 1573) discounts the impact of local forecasters who have knowledge of their area, the unique weather patterns that exist there, and the impact of severe weather.
- This bill is in direct conflict to the National Weather Service's Weather Ready Nation initiative which calls for more interaction with local life-saving emergency managers and first responders.
- The expertise and collaboration of the local meteorologists and first responders is critical during severe weather events. As part of Weather Ready Nation, your NWS meteorologists work and train with local emergency managers to prepare for weather emergencies. You won't have that face-to-face collaboration with only six regional weather forecast offices nationally.
- Existing science indicates that regionalized forecasting will result in a degradation of the accuracy and reliability of the forecasts. Repeated studies of the NWS structure conclude there's a direct correlation between the accuracy of weather forecasts and services to a community and the proximity from which they're provided.
- As recently as 2005, (CONOPS) Congress rejected proposals to consolidate forecasting operations because the NWS lacked the metrics to ensure the forecasts and services would not be degraded.
- The bill will be marked up June 24. This is a very quick timeline and doesn't allow time for due diligence.
- Here is a timeline for enacting the bill:
 - The first regional forecast offices will open within 3 years after enactment of the bill.

- The remaining will be open within 5 years after the enactment of the bill.

- You can't put a cost on saving lives, but in the case of consolidation, there is no proven cost benefit to this plan. The Bill would include the costs of building and staffing of six large regional forecasting centers, training and relocating employees, and additionally maintaining some functions of the current offices to obtain the local weather data.

- The bill directs NOAA to create a new system for issuing severe watches and warnings. *(P. 9 line 20)* There is no explanation for what this means. It is extremely open ended which is a huge risk of life and property. The American Public is used to a system of watches and warnings from the National Weather Service. In the case of severe weather events, when the public relies on NWS for clear and consistent communications – changes of an entirely new system will cause confusion among the public.

- Please contact Sen. Thune's office to oppose this bill. You can reach him through the US Capitol switchboard: (202) 224-2321 – Ask for Senator John Thune. Thank you.