



*National Weather Service
Employees Organization*

For immediate release

contact: Richard Hirn 202-255-3141

**NWSEO: FEDERAL ARBITRATOR RULES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ILLEGALLY TERMINATED FORECASTERS' UNION CONTRACT**

(Washington, D.C. March 1, 2018) - In the first major labor showdown of the Trump Administration, Labor Arbitrator Laurence Evans today ruled that the U.S. Department of Commerce illegally terminated its collective bargaining agreement with the National Weather Service Employees Organization, the union that represents the forecasters, technicians and other support personnel at NWS offices nationwide. Evans ordered the National Weather Service to rescind the notice of termination it sent to the union in July 2017.

At the arbitration hearing, held last December in Silver Spring, Maryland, the Deputy Director of the National Weather Service testified that the decision to terminate the union's contract was made in consultation with and received the personal approval of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. The NWS and the union are engaged in negotiating a successor to their 2001 collective bargaining agreement. Arbitrator Evans ruled that the agency's termination violated the 2001 agreement which is to stay in force until negotiations for a successor agreement are completed.

The union and the National Weather Service are in a pitched battle over the Administration's proposal to cut the NWS workforce and close forecast offices at night. The President's FY 19 budget request, submitted to Congress last month, proposes to eliminate 20% of all the forecasters at the nation's 122 forecast offices. At the arbitration hearing, the Deputy Director of the NWS testified that the agency was seeking a new contract with the union in order to give it the flexibility to implement these planned changes.