



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

Senate Commerce Subcommittee Chair to Keynote NWSEO Convention

(September 13, 2013) Senator Mark Begich of Alaska, Chairman of the Oceans, Atmosphere and Fisheries Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee, will deliver the Keynote Address at NWSEO's Annual Convention in St. Petersburg, FL on Sunday, September 22. Senator Begich's Subcommittee has jurisdiction over NOAA and the NWS.

Senator Mark Begich is in his fifth year representing Alaska in the U.S. Senate and has risen to key positions for Alaska. He was recently named to the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, remains on the Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Commerce committees and retains chairmanship of the Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard. Begich was also appointed as chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Intergovernmental Affairs where he will have unique authority to oversee disaster relief, response, recovery, and preparation.



Senator Begich was elected to the Senate in 2008 after serving as mayor of Anchorage for nearly six years. In 1988, at age 26, Mark was the youngest person ever elected to the Anchorage Assembly where he served for nearly 10 years. During that time, his colleagues three times elected him chairman, Anchorage's second highest political office, and he also served as chair of the budget committee. During his time as mayor, Anchorage went through the largest building boom in a generation, attracting millions of dollars' worth of public and private investment.

Senator Begich has been a strong supporter of NOAA and NWSEO. Last year, he held hearings on ways to improve weather forecasting. During this year's Commerce

Committee's hearing on the confirmation of Commerce Secretary Pritzker, Senator Begich urged her to cancel the planned furlough of NOAA employees and reexamine the hiring freeze at the NWS:

“Since 2010, the National Weather Service has lost about 300 positions, about 6%. Actually, in the Presidents fiscal year 14 budget he eliminates another 103 positions in forecast offices, for about 8%. There's a hiring freeze in place. I can tell you in Alaska this is now creating some problems. We are in flood season and have severe issues occurring already. We are about to hit fire season in many parts of the country. In Alaska, we are missing entire shifts worth of people. Now they are bringing people in on

overtime. You know running a business when you start doing overtime there are a lot of costs – fatigue and other costs that are hard to measure until something bad happens, and then you realize they were working too many hours or the fatigue occurred. Can I get a commitment from you that you will reexamine the decision of the hiring freeze and how they are handling furloughs in the Weather Service? To me - I've run businesses – I've run a city – and this is not the best way to do it. It's going to have a negative impact on the outcome, the product, in situations like Oklahoma or Sandy or otherwise." –Senator Mark Begich

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.