

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 28, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We are writing to express our concern about a potential reorganization of the National Weather Service (NWS) Forecast Offices and to reiterate several requests made by Congressional staff for materials justifying such proposed actions. Any decision-making process that could affect the safety of our communities must be presented to Congress.

NWS had contracted with the consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, to conduct a workforce analysis and provide recommendations as to how NWS can manage its workforce. We are requesting any PowerPoints or reports related to McKinsey's workforce analysis activities and the apparent sudden end to the analysis. In a meeting on May 2, 2017, our staff and representatives from other congressional offices met with staff for the Weather Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to be briefed on a potential reorganization of the NWS Forecast Offices as part of NWS Evolve activities. At that time, Congressional staff requested a complete list of McKinsey recommendations that were expected to be available during the week of May 8. They also requested justification for some of the proposed changes to forecaster duties, specifically blend verification. We understand that staff has also asked repeatedly for this information and it has not yet been provided. We are asking that you please share all of these materials, which by our understanding should all be readily available to NWS staff, with the offices who requested them by Friday, July 7, 2017.

We have heard concerns that NWS Forecast Offices may be reduced, and these offices may no longer operate 24 hours a day or 7 days a week. Are any such plans being studied, developed or implemented by NWS to reduce the hours of operations at NWS Forecast Offices? If so, please indicate which sites are being considered for reductions and provide the basis for this decision.

We have also heard concerns that the agency that the Agency may adjust responsibilities of forecasters, increasing their reliance on computer modeled forecasts. Can you provide the statistical analysis that has been conducted or commissioned indicating that computer models are as reliable as the experienced human forecaster with local knowledge?

While we support regular improvement and innovation in the National Weather Service, we are especially concerned that any reorganization or reduction of hours could result in a degradation of service. Congress has rejected major changes without such guarantees in the past. The Conference Report accompanying the FY 2006 State, Justice and Commerce Appropriations Act

asserted, "no funds shall be used to implement a plan to consolidate, regionalize, or reduce service hours at weather service forecast offices." Failure to fully demonstrate that service degradation will not occur from reorganization will likely lead Congress to the same conclusion articulated in the past.

Please provide the requested information no later than July 7, 2017. We look forward to working with you to ensure the NWS continues to provide high quality, lifesaving services and appreciate your leadership to that end.

Sincerely,



Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress