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Home > NOAA weather bill passes House Science, Space, and Technology Committee

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On March 25, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee passed the Weather Research and Forecast Innovation Act of 2015 (H.R. 1561), which is similar to H.R. 2413 that passed in the House but not the Senate last year. The legislation authorizes \$90.8 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) for weather laboratories and cooperative institutes as well as weather and air chemistry research programs that will support the bill requirements. The bill passed the committee with a few minor amendments, including changing a title from "warning improvement" to "forecast improvement" to prevent duplicative language and adding language emphasizing NOAA coordination with private and nonprofit sector emergency personnel as well as with federal, state, and tribal emergency personnel.

The bill urges NOAA to prioritize weather-related activities and directs OAR to focus on improving forecasting abilities in order to offer greater support to the National Weather Service (NWS). While the bill would continue the prohibition on NOAA commercializing its weather data, it authorizes NOAA to buy up to \$9 million in weather data from other sources. The bill also allows NOAA to transport and load its instruments on private spacecraft.

Source: Congress, E&E News
