

Barry Lee Myers

Senate Confirmation Hearing

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, honorable members of the Committee, thank you for the privilege of allowing me to appear today to answer your questions about my nomination.

We've met before. I worked with many of you over the past four years to support the Weather Bill, signed in April by the President, that addressed such important issues as: improved tornado and hurricane warnings, research to operations, data from commercial satellites, seasonal and inter-annual forecasts, hurricane hunter plane backup, and the reauthorization of the tsunami program.

I was privileged to testify before this committee in those regards.

*If confirmed* as NOAA Administrator, I pledge to carry out the wishes of Congress with vision, accountability and effective management – for the public good. I will ensure that the agency is staffed with top management and scientists and with talented, experienced and capable people.

If confirmed, I promise to work with you on the issues that matter for the agency, the Congress, and the Nation.

Despite hardship, I have lived the American dream. I started with little, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During my early life my father, unable to serve in the military during World War II due to a childhood disability, was a union shop steward at an RCA factory making radar unit for the war effort and after the war, later started a small business.

When I was 16, my mother had surgery that threatened her life and our family finances; as we had no health insurance. When I was 19, my father, burdened by my mother's illness and health costs, committed suicide and left the family deeply in debt. Our house was foreclosed; and we were evicted. Only our uncle's charity kept a roof over our heads. We survived with the help of government surplus food. I still remember those huge blocks of cheese and giant jars of peanut butter that we received from the back of a distribution truck.

My brothers and I worked hard, secured student loans and earned scholarships, and later started a company around a kitchen table. That company - AccuWeather, a science and technology company - is now the world's leader at what it does, serving weather information to about 2 billion devices in people's hands, virtually everywhere on earth.

When I was asked to serve as NOAA Administrator, I saw the opportunity as a way to repay my country and "pay it forward" to help others. I have travelled the world, and while opportunity exists elsewhere, mine is truly an American story.

Some have asked about my ability to serve because I have had this success and I own a minority interest of this company. They are right to ask.

The answer is that I have agreed with the Office of Government Ethics that my wife and I will resign from every company, board and organization that could be in conflict with my new role. We have also agreed to sell *ALL* of our ownership interests - shares and options - in AccuWeather and all related companies.

There will be a complete separation from the company. It is the only way I would do this. My Ethics Agreement goes beyond the usual legal requirements. As a result, I will have no allegiance elsewhere.

If confirmed, I will be joining a new team – I will be joining the NOAA Team.

My interests will be solely those of the American people, and the nation I feel so passionately about, because of the opportunities I have had.

I started my college career as a meteorology student, but left school to help my father in his business before he died. I returned as a student in economics and business administration and then went to law school. After that I spent two years in post-doctoral work at Penn State's Center for Air Environment studies as both a Pennsylvania Science and Engineering Fellow and a U.S. Public Health Service Air Pollution Fellow.

I am not a scientist, but I have a passion for science and I am a leader of scientists.

I lead a successful company full of scientists and engineers. I know how to bring people together to accomplish great things.

I believe this is why I was honored over the past two years by the world's preeminent, scientific, meteorologic and hydrologic organization – the American Meteorological Society – first, in their words "For outstanding, highly principled leadership of the American weather industry over five decades *and fostering strong cooperation between private sector and government weather services*".

As I said, those are their words, not mine.

And then the next year that organization awarded the high honor normally reserved for highly accomplished scientists – being named a Fellow of the American Meteorological Society.

Scientific integrity has been a core value for me and the central component in the success of the company I have led. It will always be in the headlights of NOAA moving forward, if I am confirmed.

I will provide the vision, leadership, and strategies to do that at NOAA. Wherever I go, I hear what you hear:

We need better weather models.

We need better research to operations.

We need to ensure continuity and cost-control of our satellite programs.

We need scientifically-enhanced management of our fisheries.

We need to address our seafood trade imbalance.

We need efficient science-based processes for permitting and environmental review.

We need to serve our port and research needs, but we have aging vessels in a tight fiscal environment.

We need to ensure quality weather and climate research and its availability to all.

We need to improve tornado and hurricane warnings.

We need initiatives in licensing emerging commercial data sources.

We need to work cooperatively with the research and academic communities and the weather industry.

These are my priorities. I believe these are your priorities.

Science is non-partisan and I believe together we can make great strides in each of these areas through quality management, strategic partnerships, and leveraging the talent, expertise and passion of the NOAA team.

I have the experience, know-how and ability to do the job for which I have been nominated – and do it well.

Thank you again for inviting me here today. I look forward to answering your questions. When we are done, I request your support.

I am eager and excited at the prospect of working with you to make NOAA – in the words of the National Research Council – Second to None.

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