

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

Nominations  
Wednesday, July 9, 2025, at 10.00 A.M.

**DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**

**COVER PAGE**  
**Neil Jacobs**

## **RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)**

***NOAA Workforce Reductions.*** I have serious concerns about the current state of NOAA's workforce. Since January 2025, NOAA has lost a combined 27,000 years of experience. The resulting brain drain has impacted the entire agency. Overall, NOAA now has more than 3,000 vacant positions across the agency. I appreciated your commitment at the hearing that "staffing the Weather service offices is a top priority" but missions across NOAA's line offices are critical.

On February 19, 2025, I sent a letter to Secretary Lutnick urging him to protect NOAA's critical workforce from the Trump Administration's reduction-in-force initiatives and hiring freeze, which would jeopardize the safety of the American public. Despite this warning, about 600 probationary employees were fired across various NOAA line offices, and over 1,000 employees have left through voluntary separation programs. These staffing shortages are disrupting NOAA's core functions. For instance, weather balloon launches have been suspended, and multiple Weather Forecast Offices no longer able to staff overnight shifts.

*Question 1:* Yes or No: Do you believe NOAA can operate at its peak effectiveness when it has over 3,000 positions vacant?

Answer: If confirmed, my focus will be on ensuring we continue to deliver on our vital mission of science, service, and stewardship.

*Question 2:* Yes or No: Do you think that the agency's ability to carry out its mission effectively has been impacted by the loss of about 2,000 officials since January?

Answer: NOAA has identified its core mission and functions, and if confirmed, my focus will be on ensuring NOAA delivers on its important functions.

*Question 3:* Yes or No: Will you commit to rule out any further large-scale reductions to NOAA's workforce if confirmed?

Answer: If confirmed, I will ensure NOAA's mission effectiveness remains steadfast and without compromise through strategic workforce management and leveraging new technologies.

*Question 4:* Yes or No: Will you commit to fill these 3,000 vacant NOAA positions without delay if confirmed?

Answer: If confirmed, I will ensure NOAA has adequate staffing to effectively carry out its core, life-saving mission and strategic priorities.

*Question 5:* What specific steps would you take to ensure the National Weather Service has sufficient staff for all Weather Forecast Offices and to provide Americans with accurate and timely weather warnings?

Answer: If confirmed, I will immediately begin working with the National Weather Service and

NOAA Office of Human Capital Services to ensure we have adequate staffing to effectively carry out its core, life-saving mission and strategic priorities.

*Question 6:* Will you ensure NOAA is adequately staffed so that Tribes are able to access meaningful government-to-government consultation and technical assistance on NOAA programs, including grants?

Answer: I support government-to-government consultations with Tribes.

*Question 7:* Executive Order 14170 implements a federal hiring freeze, but it allows for exclusions for positions related to public safety. The National Weather Service has been given a limited exemption to rehire 126 positions. Do you intend to pursue an exemption to the hiring freeze under for any other NOAA positions? If so, which positions?

Answer: If confirmed, I will evaluate to determine how best to fulfill our critical mission areas across all NOAA offices.

*Question 8:* Will you commit to providing this Committee a full list detailing the number and duties of positions that have been terminated due to layoffs, deferred resignation, or early retirement since January 20, 2025?

Answer: I am not at NOAA, so I do not have access to this information. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to provide the Committee with appropriate staffing information.

*Question 9:* What is your plan for rebuilding the base of expertise that has been lost, ensuring that our science remains cutting edge, and retaining experts that are otherwise likely to leave for work in other nations?

Answer: If confirmed, I will evaluate our base of expertise to ensure that NOAA can be a global leader in science by creating an environment where our researchers are empowered, valued, and able to deliver cutting-edge results for the American people.

***National Marine Fisheries Service.*** American fisheries are the best managed fisheries in the world because of science. However, recent staffing cuts and the ongoing federal hiring freeze have left NOAA with a shortage of fishery managers, scientists, and vacancies for 180 mariners that NOAA needs to operate its ships.

As a result, 30 percent of NOAA's research vessel fleet will not leave the dock this summer, which will result in at least 6 stock assessments being cancelled. Without stock assessments, NOAA will have to lower harvest levels. That means fewer fish, fewer fishing jobs, and a damaging ripple effect throughout coastal economies that rely on seafood.

*Question 1:* Yes or No: Do you support a hiring freeze exemption for NOAA merchant mariners needed to get NOAA ships operational?

Answer: Yes.

*Question 2:* What is your plan to address stock assessment shortfalls, including cancellation of multiple pollock, salmon, and Gulf of Mexico surveys that red snapper and mackerel fishermen depend on?

Answer: If confirmed I will work with Congress to ensure NOAA has the needed resources to prioritize surveys, including by addressing professional mariner vacancies and retention, and expanding the use of uncrewed systems to augment NOAA's ability to conduct surveys.

*Question 3:* At the hearing you said you supported Pacific salmon. Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) provides critical funding to facilitate the recovery of Pacific salmon and steelhead and the commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries that rely on them. The FY 2026 Presidential Budget would eliminate funding for this program, which has restored salmon access to over 12,000 miles of streams and leveraged \$2.2 billion in non-PCSRF contributions. Do you commit to protecting the PCSRF program and to distributing FY 2025 PCSRF funds?

Answer: Pacific salmon are critically important to the culture, recreation, and economy of Washington and the nation, especially the five species of salmon in Washington: Chinook, Coho, Chum, Pink, and Sockeye. It is my understanding that some of the populations are not showing the expected levels of recovery. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about various plans and projects to help promote recovery,.

*Question 4:* Yes or No: Do you support further investments in Tribal salmon hatchery infrastructure?

Answer: I support the significant ecological and cultural benefits derived from well-managed hatchery programs. These facilities are essential for supporting the economic well-being of Tribal communities. NOAA will continue to lend its scientific expertise and collaborate closely with the Department of Interior and Tribal partners to ensure these services continue effectively.

*Question 5:* Yes or No: Do you support moving the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Office of Protected Resources, or any of their activities and functions out of NOAA? If yes, explain why.

Answer: NOAA's FY 2026 President's Budget request proposes to transfer Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) functions in the National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources to the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which would improve coordination and efficiency, and streamline implementation of these statutes, reducing regulatory burden on American citizens and industry.

***NOAA Organic Act and Weather Act.*** During Secretary Lutnick's confirmation hearing in January, he testified that he did not support breaking up and dismantling NOAA. Unfortunately, that's exactly what the Administration is doing via executive actions.

One way to ensure certainty about NOAA's products and services that American families rely upon is to authorize NOAA in statute.

*Question 1:* Yes or No: Do you support a NOAA Organic Act? If no, why not?

Answer: Yes. I believe NOAA is long overdue to have its mission authorized in statute. An organic act, at a high level, would provide clarity to NOAA's mission in statute. There is also value in not being overly prescriptive in an organic act to allow NOAA the flexibility to quickly evolve priorities and capabilities to improve its mission.

*Question 2:* How would having an Organic Act protect communities from these disasters?

Answer: An Organic Act would eliminate ambiguities arising from dispersed authorities and could explicitly state NOAA's comprehensive role in protecting against impacts from the environmental phenomena it monitors.

*Question 3:* Yes or No: Do you support the Weather Act Reauthorization? If no, why not?

Answer: Yes

**Northwest Fisheries Science Center.** A significant portion of salmon research occurs at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. That building is in dire need of replacement. I previously secured funding for a new building that could be collocated with the University of Washington, but it was rescinded by the reconciliation bill.

*Question 1:* Do you support replacing the Northwest lab facility?

Answer: NOAA facilities, such as the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, are crucial for the agency's mission. These facilities support vital research, including that for Pacific salmon and steelhead recovery, which is critical to the economy, culture, and Tribal Treaty Rights in the Pacific Northwest. Investments in and replacement of these facilities is important but need to be approached in a manner that is realistic and sustainable. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, GSA, and partners on any appropriate steps related to the Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

**Salmon Infrastructure.** Salmon are central to the state of Washington's economy, culture, Tribal Treaty Rights, and our identity in the Pacific Northwest. We need a refined strategy with bold actions that restores critical habitats and advances innovative science to turn the tide on salmon declines so that we can make meaningful progress on salmon restoration.

*Question 1:* Yes or No: Do you support including salmon infrastructure, such as funding for hatcheries and culvert removal, in future infrastructure and surface transportation packages?

Answer: NOAA considers the Tribes key partners in fisheries management and will continue to work with them on fisheries issues.

*Question 2:* If confirmed, will you work with me to solve problems that harm salmon populations such as culverts and hazardous tire chemicals?

Answer: I understand the cultural and economic value of salmon and, if confirmed, will work with Congress on appropriate solutions to limit harm to this important resource.

**Modernizing Satellites.** In an exchange with Senator Capito regarding weather alerts, you referenced an opportunity to “modernize NOAA weather radio and potentially look at satellite capabilities.”

*Question 1:* Can you elaborate on how you would like to modernize NOAA weather radio and satellite capabilities in this way?

Answer: NOAA Weather Radio is one of the most valuable communications tools available, but it relies heavily on copper wires for broadcast. However, this reliance on copper is expensive, limited, and susceptible to extreme temperatures. By leveraging satellite capabilities, NOAA could strengthen its communication tools and ensure more reliable broadcasts of weather alerts. This modernization could improve the dissemination of critical information, particularly during severe weather events. If confirmed, I will work with the National Weather Service and partners to better understand the possibilities and resources needed to modernize NOAA Weather Radio.

*Question 2:* Do you have concerns that a decreased NOAA budget will make it difficult to complete projects like this, which you called a “priority”?

Answer: If confirmed, I will work to ensure NOAA fulfills its mission requirements.

**NOAA Communication.** In an exchange with Senator Hickenlooper during your hearing, you testified, “I’m not in the agency yet.”

*Question 1:* Have you entered any NOAA or DOC facility since you were nominated on February 3, 2025? If yes, please specify the location, date, time, and circumstances for each instance.

Answer: A couple times in February and March I went to NCEP for community UFS meetings as part of my position at UCAR. I was in HCHB May 15th and 16th working on my questionnaire and getting it notarized. I was in DOC HCHB part of week 1 of June for some meet and greets and the NOAA Fish Fry. I went to both HCHB and SSMC3 June 10 and 11 to get some material for hearing prep and for a retirement party. HCHB July 1, 2, 7, 8th for hearing prep.

*Question 2:* Have you communicated with Secretary Lutnick or Deputy Secretary Dabbar since your nomination regarding any policy, program, or activity related to NOAA? If yes, please specify the date, subject matter, participants, and circumstances for each interaction.

Answer: I have had a few high-level conversations to discuss my onboarding if confirmed as well as a general meet-and-greet to get to know future colleagues.

*Question 3:* Have you provided advice on NOAA policy, programs, or operations with any NOAA or DOC official since your nomination not reflected in the above question? If yes, please specify the date, subject matter, participants, and circumstances for each interaction.

Answer: As part of my position with UCAR that deals with the UFS, I attended monthly virtual meetings for model development that were attended by NOAA employees. The community UFS is a community-led effort out of UCAR.

***Dismantling the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).***

The Trump Administration is pursuing a FY 2026 budget proposal that would reduce NOAA's budget by 27 percent, eliminate Congressionally mandated programs, and transfer part of the National Marine Fisheries Service to the Interior Department.

During his confirmation hearing, Secretary Lutnick told me that he has, "no interest in separating" NOAA and that breaking up NOAA, "is not on my agenda." Yet, that is exactly what the Administration is trying to do.

*Question 1:* Do you support any function, mission, or congressionally authorized or appropriated work within NOAA, or executed by NOAA, being moved out of the NOAA or the Department of Commerce? If yes, please describe.

Answer: I recognize the ongoing discussions regarding NOAA's structure. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that NOAA's critical missions -- from weather forecasting to ocean and fisheries management -- continue to be executed with the utmost effectiveness and scientific rigor, regardless of any potential organizational changes.

***NOAA Research.*** As an atmospheric scientist, you understand the importance of scientific research and development. The FY 2026 Presidential Budget proposes eliminating the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) as a line office. The budget would terminate all funding for NOAA's Research Laboratories and Cooperative Institutes, Regional Climate Data and Information, Climate Competitive Research, National Sea Grant College Program, and the National Oceanographic Partnership Program.

*Question 1:* Yes or no, do you support eliminating OAR? If yes, explain why.

Answer: I support the President's budget request for NOAA. The budget request streamlines agency operations and prioritizes its public safety mission, while providing for efficiencies within NOAA research by more closely aligning operational and research components to foster collaboration and drive innovation. This realignment will strengthen delivery of actionable science to NOAA's operational end-users and remains responsive to the needs of the public.

*Question 2:* Do you believe NOAA/NWS forecast improvements will flatline or degrade if this research is eliminated?

Answer: Research to support forecast improvements is being realigned to sit closer to the National Weather Service to strengthen the transition from research to operations.

*Question 3:* How do you define climate?

Answer: In the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017, “seasonal” is defined as the time range between 3 months and 2 years, and “subseasonal” is defined as the time range between 2 weeks and 3 months. It is implied that “climate” is the time range beyond seasonal.

*Question 4:* What do you believe is NOAA’s role in climate research?

Answer: NOAA’s mission to understand and predict changes in weather, oceans, climate, and coasts, and to provide this information to decision-makers. NOAA accomplishes this goal through long-term observations, cutting-edge modeling, and scientific analysis.

*Question 5:* Do you support fully funding NOAA’s Cooperative Institutes?

Answer: I support the President’s budget request to streamline agency operations, prioritize its public safety mission, and find efficiencies. My priority will be to maintain this mission by ensuring research remains focused, responsive, and tightly linked to the needs of the public.

*Question 6:* Do you support fully funding the NOAA Research Laboratories?

Answer: I support the President’s budget request to streamline agency operations, prioritize its public safety mission, and find efficiencies. I support the research capabilities provided by these laboratories and will ensure these capabilities continue to advance NOAA's mission.

*Question 7:* The National Severe Storm Laboratory’s experimental Warn-on-Forecast System is working to improve lead times for tornado and severe weather warnings. Do you support continuing the Warn-on-Forecast System and similar weather research efforts?

Answer: Warn-on-Forecast is a very successful modeling system. Despite being considered a research project, it has been used operationally to assist in NWS’s public safety mission. I support transitioning programs such as this into operations to keep Americans safe.

*Question 8:* How will you ensure the safety of the American public if OAR programs that aim to prepare communities to face extreme weather events are dismantled?

Answer: I will continue to support NOAA’s mission of providing environmental data to decision makers and ensure that NOAA is adequately staffed to meet this mission. My understanding is that programs that support community preparedness for extreme weather are being realigned within the National Weather Service and National Ocean Service to ensure they are aligned with operational end-users.

***Climate Adaptation Partnerships.*** There are 13 NOAA Climate Adaptation Partnership (CAP) teams around the country. And yet, the grant to only one, the Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative (NCRC) based at the University of Washington, remains terminated by the Administration.

The NCRC team addresses unique needs of the region, including those related to extreme heat that led to more than 400 deaths in Washington due to the “heat dome” that descended on the region during the summer of 2021. NCRC also helps vulnerable populations to mitigate against the negative health effects of wildfire smoke and extreme heat.

*Question 1:* Could you provide us with the rationale for why this grant is the only one that remains terminated?

Answer: I appreciate your support for the CAP program. I am not privy to current administration actions.

*Question 2:* Another team has had its grant restored. What steps can the NCRC take to have its grant restored?

Answer: I am not privy to current administration actions.

***Scientific Integrity.*** During your previous service as Acting NOAA Administrator, the Department of Commerce Inspector General found that NOAA officials, including you, issued statements under political pressure that contradicted the scientific forecasts from the National Weather Service. NOAA also commissioned an investigation by the National Academy of Public Administration that found you violated NOAA scientific integrity policies.

*Question 1:* Do you commit to uphold and abide by NOAA’s scientific integrity policy if confirmed?

Answer: I am committed to promoting scientific integrity within NOAA. I have valued, promoted and benefited from scientific integrity throughout my career, in academia, industry and at NOAA and will continue to champion it going forward.

*Question 2:* What specific lessons have you learned after being found to have violated NOAA’s scientific integrity policies?

Answer: I commit to rigorous adherence to and enforcement of scientific integrity policies to ensure NOAA's forecasts cannot be compromised.

*Question 3:* What specific steps will you take to ensure that NOAA’s forecasts cannot be compromised and career scientists are empowered to publish and communicate their findings without political interference in the future?

Answer: I commit to rigorous adherence to and enforcement of scientific integrity policies to ensure NOAA's forecasts cannot be compromised.

**Contract Review.** Currently, all NOAA contracts and grants greater than \$100k require Secretary Lutnick's personal approval. There are thousands of contracts and grants that meet that threshold. As you can imagine, this has resulted in a significant bottleneck, causing critical contracts to terminate, lapse, or be signed mere hours before they expire.

*Question 1:* Do you support this practice?

Answer: Yes. I recognize the critical importance of timely and effective contract and grant execution to NOAA's mission. Following the Administration's Executive Orders on procurement and contracting, the Department of Commerce has implemented an updated review process for contracts and grants, including those over \$100,000. I am committed to working closely with the Department to ensure that this process protects integrity, while also allowing NOAA to carry out its responsibilities without unnecessary disruption.

*Question 2.* What will you do to ensure NOAA contracts are reviewed in a timely and efficient manner without inadvertent lapses?

Answer: I will work closely with NOAA and the Department of Commerce to assist in timely review of contracts.

*Question 3.* Will you commit to alerting Congress of the lapse or cancellation of any monetarily or operationally significant contracts in a timely manner?

Answer: I will work through the appropriate Congressional Affairs office and the Department of Commerce to ensure information is transmitted in a timely manner.

**Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO) Satellite System.** As the GOES-R satellites end their operational lifetime, the GeoXO satellites will replace them. Currently NOAA plans to launch six satellites with instruments including a lightning mapper (LMX), Sounder (GXS), Atmospheric Composition (ACX), Imager (GXI), and Ocean Color (OCX). The GeoXO Sounder will improve regional forecast accuracy by 40% and is tailored to improve forecasts of rapidly changing convective events like the severe storms that caused catastrophic flooding in Texas.

*Question 1:* Do you support NOAA's current plan for six satellites?

Answer: I am not privy to the status of current instrument contracts and their life-cycle procurement and management. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the Agency's plans for their next generation geostationary satellite constellation.

*Question 2:* What can NOAA do to maintain the launch timeline and avoid a gap in coverage?

Answer: To maintain launch timelines and avoid data gaps, NOAA should ensure it works with its federal partners and stakeholders on procurement schedules, system integration, and constellation management. NOAA should also, where appropriate and feasible, consider

partnerships with other federal agencies and the private sector for unique orbits and data that support public safety and operational readiness.

*Question 3:* The plan laid out for the GeoXO program under your leadership during the first Trump Administration also included economically beneficial ocean color, atmospheric composition, and lightening mapper observations. These instruments help us monitor air quality impacts from pollution and smoke, predict the intensity of hurricanes and respond to wildfires, and track ocean pollution, water quality, and hazards like harmful algal blooms that can impact fisheries and water supplies. Do you still support including instruments for these observations on GeoXO satellites?

Answer: I am not privy to the status of current instrument contracts and their life-cycle procurement and management. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing NOAA's plan for the GeoXO constellation. I will continue to support NOAA's observing networks that improve NOAA's mission.

*Question 4:* Do you support cancelling existing contracts that would incur large penalties?

Answer: I am not privy to the status of current contracts or procurement decisions. The Administration is committed to cost efficiency and ending wasteful government spending. If confirmed, I will continue to support networks that improve NOAA's mission and support public safety while balancing budgetary constraints.

**Fisheries.** According to the latest statistics from 2022, US commercial and recreational fisheries generated \$321 billion in sales, 2.3 million jobs, and \$149.8 billion in value-added to the US economy. Commercial fisheries landings alone were valued at \$5.9 billion, and recreational fishermen took 201 million fishing trips that year. Communities across the country rely on these fisheries and the benefits they provide. They also rely on NOAA Fisheries providing world class science and management to support this fishing activity.

*Question 1.* Will you commit to investing effort and resources into improving fishery data systems, navigating climate change, and other pressures on fisheries?

Answer: I look forward to working with all stakeholders to address pressures on American fisheries. In addition to promoting the production, sale, and trade of U.S. fishery and aquaculture products, embracing new technologies and science-based approaches to stock assessments will benefit both the U.S. commercial fishing industry and recreational fishing community.

*Question 2:* Will you commit to ensuring stock assessment surveys are completed?

Answer: If confirmed, I will work to ensure NOAA has the needed resources to prioritize surveys, including addressing professional mariner vacancies and retention, and expanding the use of uncrewed systems to augment NOAA's ability to conduct surveys.

**Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS).** IOOS provides real-time data that are a critical part of accurate weather forecasting and provide information that keep fishermen, mariners, and

recreational boaters safe while at sea. They also provide information that is essential for harmful algal bloom forecasting. However, the administration has proposed eliminating funding for regional IOOS networks.

*Question 1:* Do you support this critical program that aids in weather forecasting, benefits our nation's fisheries, supports commerce, and keeps Americans safe on the water?

Answer: I am supportive of NOAA continuing to give public access to regional ocean observing data, and will prioritize the integration of available federal, academic, private sector and non-profit ocean data. I remain supportive of maintaining accessibility of ocean information in support of defense, maritime navigation, commerce, public health and safety, weather forecasting, fisheries, marine conservation and protected areas, and ocean and Great Lakes resource management.

***Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) Fishing.*** IUU fishing is a key driver of global overfishing that threatens marine ecosystems, food security, and regional stability. It's a major global challenge that requires a whole-of-government approach by US agencies for effective data collection, sharing of information, and enforcement efforts. The recent Executive Order 14276 on seafood competitiveness emphasized the urgency of protecting U.S. markets and maritime security from threats posed by IUU fishing and those products entering U.S. supply chains. It explicitly calls for enhanced federal efforts to counter IUU fishing, improve traceability of seafood products, and coordinate more effectively across agencies, including CBP, Coast Guard, and the State Department. Given the scale of the threat and the vulnerabilities in U.S. seafood supply chains, this EO represents an opportunity and responsibility for NOAA to lead and act quickly.

*Question 1:* What actions will you take to ensure NOAA's efforts to address IUU fishing is prioritized and sufficiently resourced?

Answer: Combating IUU fishing is critical to protecting American seafood competitiveness. If confirmed, I will ensure that NOAA is advancing stronger enforcement, expanding the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, and working with global partners to close loopholes that allow illegally caught fish into the U.S. market.

*Question 2:* What actions will you take to improve coordination between NOAA and other agencies and ensure a whole-of-government approach to combating IUU fishing?

Answer: The recent Executive Order on Seafood Competitiveness, building on EO 13921, directs DOC and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to assess seafood competitiveness issues and jointly develop a comprehensive seafood strategy, and convenes the interagency Seafood Trade Task Force co-chaired by USTR and DOC. If confirmed, I plan to use this vehicle to advance objectives to improve access to foreign markets, address unfair trade practices, and ensure a fair and competitive domestic market for U.S. seafood producers.

***Extreme Weather.*** According to NOAA, since 1980 we've had an average of nine extreme weather events annually that cost over \$1 billion each. However, in the last five years, that has

spiked to 23 events per year, and last year it was 27 events. Climate change is driving more intense hurricanes, more frequent severe atmospheric rivers, rain events, and is doubling the number of wildfires. NOAA plays a principal role in ensuring the American public is informed and prepared to respond to extreme weather events.

*Question 1:* As extreme weather events across the country become more frequent, what do you believe is NOAA's role in coordinating resilience and response efforts?

Answer: NOAA's role in coordinating resilience and response efforts is central to supporting the U.S. government's ability to respond to extreme weather events. NOAA provides authoritative data, tools, and forecasts to decision-makers.

*Question 2:* How will you improve NOAA's cooperation with local emergency managers during extreme weather events?

Answer: NOAA plays a crucial role in supporting emergency managers before, during and after hazardous weather events. This relationship between NOAA and emergency managers is built around communication, coordination, and data sharing to help protect lives and property. If confirmed, I will prioritize improvements including adopting new technologies, embedding of NWS staff in Emergency Operations Centers to provide face-to-face support, and continued enhancement of NWS's messaging and impact-based decision support services.

*Question 3:* NOAA/NWS radars are nearing end of life. What plan would you enact as NOAA Administrator to ensure these crucial instruments are upgraded and replaced with little to no interruption of data?

Answer: The National Weather Service radars are reaching the end of their life span in the 2030s. NWS is actively working on a plan to upgrade and/or replace radars. If confirmed, I will work with NOAA lines offices to ensure NOAA radar systems continue to meet mission requirements, and that advanced planning is underway to eventually replace these systems in the future using the best available science and innovation.

***Commercial Data and Services.*** Project 2025 proposes that "NWS should fully commercialize its forecasting operations" and encourages increased use of private sector data and services. As a government agency funded by taxpayer money, NOAA is a trusted source of free, reliable data.

*Question 1:* What do you see as NOAA's core government functions that cannot be privatized or commercialized, particularly at NWS and NESDIS?

Answer: NOAA's public safety mission and its weather forecasting are core government functions that Americans across the country rely on every day. NOAA has historically utilized data and expertise from non-government sources to help it create and improve its weather models. NOAA relies heavily on non-governmental partners to help build its observing networks

and infrastructure. However, the products and services derived from these observing systems and infrastructure are a core government function.

*Question 2:* How will you ensure that NOAA avoids “vendor lock” when incorporating more commercial data and services?

*Answer:* NOAA takes commercial marketplace offerings into consideration when reviewing potential new sources of data. Increased use of industry engagement, such as industry days, general requests for information, and advanced planning can help ensure NOAA has an adequate understanding of commercial capabilities, and where these capabilities align NOAA mission needs.

*Question 3:* Currently, NOAA data is openly available to the public, but if NOAA buys data from private companies using taxpayer money, how will you ensure data will be made publicly available?

*Answer:* NOAA’s products and services are made available to the public. NOAA has historically acquired data from non-traditional or non-governmental partners, often with open redistribution licenses. There have been instances of limited redistribution restrictions; however, NOAA and government end-users, as well as researchers, typically have access to these datasets through research-only agreements or with time-lagged full access.

*Question 4:* Do you agree that NOAA satellites and associated ground and data systems are core public infrastructure and a national security asset?

*Answer:* NOAA’s current satellites and ground systems in use are taxpayer funded public infrastructure and national security assets.

### ***Climate Change.***

*Question 1:* Yes or No: Do you agree with the scientific consensus that human activity is the primary cause of climate change?

*Answer:* In the absence of various short-term natural forcings that can often dominate the surface and lower-tropospheric temperature measurements, humans do have an impact through greenhouse gas emissions.

*Question 2:* Yes or No: Do you agree with the scientific consensus that climate change is driving more intense and more frequent severe weather events?

*Answer:* Scientific consensus, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s latest Assessment Report (AR6, Chapter 12, Table 12.12), is not uniform across each type and event, with some events such as tropical cyclones, heavy precipitation, and floods receiving low confidence in observed trends, while other events are listed as medium confidence. NOAA will continue to work to understand and predict changes in the weather, oceans, climate, and coasts.

**SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY (D-MA)**

1. Do you agree that warming waters, caused by climate change, are causing fish stocks to shift from their traditional ports? If confirmed, how would you support adaptive fisheries management policies and initiatives?

Answer: I recognize that many stocks are shifting. If confirmed, I will focus on maintaining scientific assessment capabilities within NOAA Fisheries, leveraging data and modeling advancements, and providing actionable decision support to our management partners.

Do you believe that eliminating funding to interjurisdictional fisheries grants will help fishermen deal with shifting stocks? If yes, please explain why.

Answer: I recognize that many stocks are shifting, resulting in increased operational costs and challenges for the American fishing fleet. If confirmed, I will work to identify ways to support fishermen dealing with shifting stocks, including through grants, technology and modeling advancements, and provision of data and actionable decision support to our management partners.

2. The Trump budget would cut the National Marine Fisheries Service by 33 percent, zeroing out programs that include interjurisdictional fisheries grants, species recovery funds, and salmon programs. The proposal also cuts fisheries management programs and services by 25 percent.

Do you believe that cutting funds intended to aid fish species recovery will support American seafood competitiveness? If yes, please explain why.

Answer: I support the President's Budget. The recent Executive Order on Seafood Competitiveness, building on EO 13921, directs DOC and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to assess seafood competitiveness issues and jointly develop a comprehensive seafood strategy, and convenes the interagency Seafood Trade Task Force co-chaired by USTR and DOC. I plan to use this vehicle to advance objectives to improve access to foreign markets, address unfair trade practices, and ensure a fair and competitive domestic market for U.S. seafood producers.

Do you believe reduced funding to fisheries management programs will support American fishermen in getting up-to-date information, quotas, and federal aid? If yes, please explain why reduced resources for this service will support American fishermen.

Answer: Supporting American fishermen is a priority of this Administration. If confirmed, I commit to evaluating all options and resources to achieve that goal.

3. How do you plan to ensure that fisheries surveys take place on time across the nation, following the reductions in force and budget—especially considering American fishermen are already experiencing ongoing lapses in survey data caused by insufficient funds?

Answer: If confirmed, I will focus on addressing professional mariner vacancies and retention and expanding the use of uncrewed systems to augment NOAA's ability to conduct surveys.

4. The President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 eliminates NOAA's primary research arm—the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR). This would zero out funding for vital weather and climate research programs that enable reliable, accurate forecasting, and a better understanding of the climate crisis. You testified that OAR programs will simply be reorganized into different offices, yet many critical OAR programs that are necessary to Massachusetts and the rest of the nation are zeroed out and not simply moved. Do you believe that eliminating funding for the research and science that underpins National Weather Service and National Ocean Service data result in improved forecasting? If yes, please explain how.

Answer: I support the President's budget request for NOAA. The budget request streamlines agency operations and prioritizes its public safety mission, while providing for efficiencies within NOAA research by more closely aligning operational and research components to foster collaboration and drive innovation. This realignment will strengthen delivery of actionable science to NOAA's operational end-users and remains responsive to the needs of the public. If confirmed, I will continue to support NOAA's mission of providing environmental data to decision makers and ensure that NOAA is adequately staffed to meet this mission. My understanding is that programs that support community preparedness for extreme weather are being realigned within the National Weather Service and National Ocean Service to ensure they are aligned with operational end-users.

5. During our meeting, you agreed that ocean observations are critically important for accurate weather forecasting. During your nomination hearing, when asked about how you would improve weather forecasting, you said accurate forecasting relies on "more and better observations because these predictions are initial value problems." The President's Budget zeroes out the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), and the Sustainable Ocean Observation and Monitoring (SOOM) system budget would be cut significantly and is set to be moved under the National Ocean Service. In addition to all of the data these systems provide to researchers and others who work on or around the ocean, the Navy relies on utilizing NOAA

sensor buoys to forecast how water conditions will affect submarine communications and operations, making them critical to our national defense.

Will you commit to advocate for observations and monitoring services?

Answer: I support public access to regional ocean observing data and will prioritize the integration of available federal, academic, private sector and non-profit ocean data.

Will you ensure that these observing systems are able to provide undiminished and accurate data to the American people, our military, and small business owners?

Answer: I will work to maintain the accessibility of ocean information in support of defense, maritime navigation, commerce, public health and safety, weather forecasting, fisheries, marine conservation and protected areas, and ocean and Great Lakes resource management.

6. You have previously voiced support for Sea Grant. To all 34 states with a Sea Grant program, Sea Grant is part of their core capabilities. Sea Grant is a smart and cost-effective investment in our coastal communities—in 2023, Sea Grant's return on investment of \$94 million was nearly a full order of magnitude at a whopping \$828 million.

Do you support the Sea Grant program?

Answer: The President's budget request clearly focuses federal spending.

If eliminated, how would NOAA achieve Sea Grant's extension work, workforce development, and local innovation roles that are vital to American seafood competitiveness?

Answer: NOAA would support essential aspects of extension work and local innovation by focusing on data dissemination within NOAA Fisheries and the National Ocean Service. Workforce development would be supported through NOAA's continued investments in foundational science and technology.

7. During our meeting, you spoke of the need for proactive measures that can prevent and mitigate devastating loss of life and property caused by severe weather events turbocharged by the climate crisis. The President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 would eliminate funding for NOAA's Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program. This program funds projects that improve risk communication during wildfires and storm surges and allow localities and states to create effective heat response plans. Projects like these can help us protect critical infrastructure, preserve homes, but most importantly—save lives.

Do you support the elimination of this program?

Answer: I support high priority ocean and weather research programs in the National Ocean Service and the National Weather Service.

If yes, how will you ensure that the proactive measures you claim to support can be deployed successfully at the local and state level, where they are needed most?

Answer: If confirmed, my focus will be on providing critical scientific data and actionable insights that empower local and state planners to develop their own strategies.

8. In spite of increasingly severe and frequent weather events, NOAA has lost more than 1,875 employees since the start of this administration—amounting to a collective 27,000 years of expertise lost. During your confirmation hearing, you expressed support for National Weather Service staff at regional forecasting offices. If nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary and NOAA Administrator, will you commit to restoring staff levels at NWS forecasting offices to ensure that NOAA accomplishes its mission?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the National Weather Service and NOAA Office of Human Capital Services to ensure we have adequate staffing to effectively carry out its core, life-saving mission and strategic priorities.

If not, how will you deliver on NOAA's mission without adequate NWS staffing levels?

## **SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH (D-IL)**

NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), with a \$738 million budget, funds a wealth of research programs including 10 major labs and 16 cooperative institutes — university-based research centers responsible for roughly half of NOAA's scientific research. The NOAA FY26 budget request terminates OAR, which includes these Climate Laboratories, Cooperative Institutes and research programs and all of the research that goes along with them.

The former head of OAR, Craig McLean stated these cuts would cripple U.S. global leadership on climate and ocean science, sending us back to the 1950's. He also said NOAA's research is inseparable from the agency's mission and that eliminating it would disrupt everything from tracking fish migration to forecasting hurricanes, heatwaves, wildfires and deadly floods.

1. Do you believe that NOAA's research is inseparable from the agency's mission, and critical in supporting key economic sectors and advancing vital national interests related to public safety, disaster preparedness and emergency response? Please explain.

Answer: NOAA's mission is vital to protecting lives, property, natural resources, and economic well-being.

2. Do you believe OAR and the major labs and cooperative institutes contribute critical work to our national research?

Answer: OAR programs that support community preparedness for severe weather are being realigned to ensure their work is more directly connected to operational programs within the National Weather Service and National Ocean Service. This realignment will strengthen delivery of actionable science to NOAA's operational end-users and remains responsive to the needs of the public. If confirmed, I will continue to support NOAA's mission of providing environmental data to decision makers and ensure that NOAA is adequately staffed to meet this mission.

3. Please explain how you will ensure these labs are staffed with the necessary experts and that their services will continue to deliver the science, data and resources to State agencies and the public that rely on them?

Answer: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that NOAA's critical missions -- from weather forecasting to ocean and fisheries management -- continue to be executed with the utmost effectiveness and scientific rigor, regardless of any potential organizational changes.

The Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab (GLERL) is a Cooperative Institute within the OAR. It is a NOAA regional center for innovative research that is critical in developing coastal forecast systems and toxic algal bloom forecasting, informing the restoration and management of sustainable ecosystems and resilient communities.

1. How will you maintain these Cooperative Institutes' labs, research and other services that they provide that are essential to public health of the Nation and the health of the Great Lakes?

Answer: My priority will be to maintain this mission by ensuring research remains focused, responsive, and tightly linked to the needs of the public.

2. Please explain how will NOAA continue to be an effective partner in the implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative when President Trump is seeking to terminate programs that support this bipartisan initiative?

Answer: I support the President's Budget. Even without dedicated program support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, NOAA would still serve as the authoritative federal source for foundational scientific capabilities essential to the Great Lakes.

Professional complaints were filed against you based on your involvement in Trump's inaccurate statements and use of a Sharpie pen to ridiculously, and falsely, mislead the public into believing that the National Weather Service (NWS) originally projected the storm area for Hurricane Dorian to include Alabama. This was a major scandal because it involved President Trump providing the public with incorrect information about the projected path of a dangerous Hurricane, and when corrected—instead of humbly acknowledging his mistake and thanking the NWS for correcting his erroneous warning—the President willfully and knowingly falsified an agency exhibit with a Sharpie pen in an effort to blame NWS for the inaccurate storm warning he tweeted to the people of Alabama. In a pathetic act of cowardice and sycophancy, under your leadership, NOAA sent an unsigned letter to NWS criticizing the agency for correcting the

President's incorrect storm path warning. This scandal resulted in NOAA's Scientific Integrity Officer initiating an independent investigation that was conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).

NAPA found you violated NOAA's Code of Ethics for Science Supervision and Management in two of the three complaints. Specifically, NAPA found that you "engaged in misconduct intentionally, knowingly or in reckless disregard of the Code of Scientific Conduct or Code of Ethics for Science Supervision and Management in NOAA's Scientific Integrity Policy."

1. Do you concur with NAPA that you "engaged in misconduct intentionally, knowingly or in reckless disregard of the Code of Scientific Conduct or Code of Ethics for Science Supervision and Management in NOAA's Scientific Integrity Policy"?

Answer: If confirmed, I will lead NOAA knowing that every action taken under my leadership will uphold transparency, rigor, and the unimpeded communication of scientific findings.

2. Effective leaders lead by example, shaping an organization's culture less with words than through demonstrated actions that exemplify the honor, integrity and values expected of all employees. Given an independent NAPA investigation determined that as Acting Administrator, you failed to uphold the Code of Scientific Conduct or the Code of Ethics for Science Supervision and Management in NOAA's Scientific Integrity Policy, why should this committee have confidence in your ability to lead NOAA and ensure agency compliance with all ethical codes related to scientific conduct and integrity?

Answer: I commit to rigorous adherence to and enforcement of scientific integrity policies to ensure NOAA's forecasts cannot be compromised.

3. What specific actions will you take to uphold NOAA's Scientific Integrity Policy and protect career scientists from political or commercial interference in their work?

Answer: I am committed to promoting scientific integrity within NOAA.

4. Will you commit to publicly disclosing any meetings or communications you have with former employers, former clients or former contractors related to NOAA's operations or contracting decisions?

Answer: Per my ethics agreement, I am recused from holding meetings with or being involved in contracting decisions involving former employers.

The horrific weather events in Texas further iterate the need for public, free, government-backed reliable and innovative weather forecasting and data. We cannot put people's lives at stake by turning weather forecasting and information into a subscription service. This would turn weather and safety information into just one more thing that would intentionally and disproportionately place economically disadvantaged households in harm's way.

1. Given NOAA's statutory obligation to provide free, government-backed weather and climate information, do you support continued public access to NOAA data without restriction or privatization?

Answer: I remain committed to maintaining accessibility of ocean information in support of defense, maritime navigation, commerce, public health and safety, weather forecasting, fisheries, marine conservation and protected areas, and ocean and Great Lakes resource management. In 2019, under my leadership, NOAA unveiled the Big Data Project, now called NOAA Open Data Dissemination, that improved public access to all NOAA data through partnerships with cloud service providers.

2. Please explain your view on the role of private-sector weather providers in relation to NOAA.

Answer: I am committed to continuing NOAA's status as the authoritative source for environmental data used to support the public, private, and academic sectors.

3. How will you ensure that NOAA's science and data remain accessible to the public, free from politicization or commercial barriers?

Answer: I support public access to relevant data. If confirmed, I will ensure that NOAA's critical mission will continue to be executed with the utmost effectiveness and scientific rigor.

4. How will you ensure NOAA programs, especially in climate resilience and weather forecasting, are equitably serving underserved and vulnerable communities?

Answer: NOAA has a responsibility to serve the American public. I am committed to ensuring that NOAA lives up to that responsibility.

President Joe Biden was the certified winner of the 2020 presidential election.

1. Please answer with "yes" or "no". Was President Biden certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election because President Biden received more votes than President Trump in the 2020 presidential election?

Answer: Former President Joseph Biden was certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-sixth President on January 20, 2021.

2. Please answer with "yes" or "no". Did President Trump lose the 2020 presidential election?

Answer: Former President Joseph Biden was certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-sixth President on January 20, 2021.

3. Please answer with "yes" or "no". Did President Trump lose the popular vote in the 2020 presidential election?

Answer: Former President Joseph Biden was certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-sixth President on January 20, 2021.

4. Please answer with "yes" or "no". Did President Trump lose the electoral college in the 2020 presidential election?

Answer: Former President Joseph Biden was certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-sixth President on January 20, 2021.

5. If you were unable or unwilling to provide a “yes” or “no” answer to any of the prior questions, please provide a detailed explanation justifying your refusal to provide such a clear and simple answer, including whether your refusal to provide a simple “yes” or “no” answer indicates that you believe President Trump received more votes than President Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

Answer: See my responses to questions 1-4 above.

The 14th Amendment states. *“No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.”*

1. Where were you on January 6, 2021?

Answer: I was at home in Arlington, VA.

2. Do you believe the events at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, were an insurrection, a rebellion against the Constitution of the United States, or both—and if you do not believe the events that occurred at or near the United States Capitol on that date comprised an insurrection or rebellion against the Constitution, please provide a detailed explanation explaining your belief.

This question is outside of the scope of my nomination to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

3. Why did you choose to resign, or choose not to resign, as Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere on January 6, 2021, or in the following days?

Answer: I chose to serve until the end of my term on January 20, 2021.

4. Do you support President Trump’s decision to “grant a full, complete and unconditional pardon to all other individuals convicted of offenses related to events that occurred at or near the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021”?

Answer: This question is outside of the scope of my nomination to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

5. Do you believe President Trump's decision to "grant a full, complete and unconditional pardon to all other individuals convicted of offenses related to events that occurred at or near the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021" is consistent with supporting law enforcement?

Answer: This question is outside of the scope of my nomination to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, but I have always rejected violence against law enforcement.

## **SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)**

The Office of Oceanic & Atmospheric Research (OAR) is the key scientific arm of NOAA. NOAA's research and services are mission critical functions that can save countless lives. OAR plays a key role in supporting key research missions across the Earth System Research Laboratories, partner universities, and Cooperative Institutes in Boulder, CO.

*1. Please restate your response for the record—do you believe the U.S. is making the necessary investments into scientific research and operational services through NOAA? Why or why not?*

Answer: If confirmed as NOAA Administrator, my focus will always be on maximizing the impact of NOAA's diverse capabilities for the benefit of the Nation.

*2. Within NOAA's purview, which fields of science do you believe require the most urgent attention by the agency? What outcomes do you hope to achieve or better understand in this stated field?*

Answer: Earth system science is the interplay between many fields that NOAA deals with. To better predict the future state of the oceans or atmosphere, we need to better understand the various systems and how they interact.

*3. How can the U.S. remain the world leader in scientific research and weather forecasting over other competitors?*

Answer: If confirmed, one of my top priorities is to return the United States to the world's leader in global weather forecast modeling. As a matter of public safety, national security, and national pride, we will restore American technological superiority for this vital service for the country and our military serving around the world. This will require embracing new technologies, novel approaches, and partnering with industry to advance global observing systems.

*4. What do you believe would be the consequences if the functions of OAR are discontinued or reorganized into the National Weather Service (NWS)? Do you believe the NWS is prepared to take on these additional responsibilities?*

Answer: If confirmed, my goal will be to accelerate the application of cutting-edge science into real-time forecasting, improve collaboration between researchers and forecasters, and ultimately deliver more accurate and timely information to the public.

*5. Will you commit to resisting all forms of political pressure when it comes to any decision related to NOAA's research, services, or funding appropriated by Congress?*

Answer: I will promote scientific integrity within NOAA. I have valued, promoted and benefited from scientific integrity throughout my career, in academia, industry and at NOAA and will continue to champion it going forward.

Cooperative institutes maximize federal investments by leveraging academic infrastructure and external funding to amplify NOAA's capabilities. NOAA's Cooperative Institutes across the nation—such as the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) and the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere (CIRA) in Colorado—are vital partners in advancing NOAA's mission. These Institutes support everything from disaster forecasting to ecosystem monitoring, while also training the next generation of scientists and supporting regional economies. Their work represents a highly efficient federal investment that leverages academic infrastructure and external funding to amplify NOAA's capabilities.

*6. If confirmed, how would you increase NOAA's use of Cooperative Institutes to effectively deliver public services (e.g. disaster forecasting, ecosystem monitoring)?*

Answer: The Cooperative Institutes should prioritize research that has a path to operations, while at the same time considering reducing parallel and potentially redundant projects.

*7. Will you commit to preserving the funding, resources, and partnerships NOAA has formed with all 16 Cooperative Institutes across the U.S.?*

Answer: If confirmed, my priority will be to ensure research remains focused, responsive, and tightly linked to the needs of the public.

The United States' ability to accurately forecast extreme weather can help communities avoid catastrophe and save lives. Natural disasters cost the U.S. over \$182 billion in damages last year alone. Reports indicate NOAA has stopped updating the database managed by the National Center for Environmental Information that tracks natural disasters which cause over \$1 billion in damages. This will limit the scope of existing disaster records to only those that occurred between 1980 through 2024. Between 2020 and 2024, the frequency of natural disasters increased to a rough average of 23 per year.

*8. Is our ability to forecast natural disasters an economic and national security imperative?*

Answer: Yes.

*9. Will you commit to restoring and updating NOAA's database managed by the National Center for Environmental Information that tracks natural disasters that cause over \$1 billion in damages?*

Answer: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that whatever data NCEI is collecting and managing will be made publicly available.

*10. What do you believe is driving the increasing frequency of major natural disasters in the U.S.?*

Answer: It really depends on what sort of natural disaster is being considered. When assessing trends of "extreme storms", according to the IPCC's AR6 Chapter 11, there is low confidence in trends related to tropical storm frequency (11.7.1.2), extratropical cyclones (11.7.2.1), and severe convection (11.7.3). This does not necessarily imply there is not a physical trend related to warming. There are historical data inhomogeneities and limitations in instrumentation that make building long term datasets challenging. NOAA will continue to work to observe, understand, and predict changes in the weather, oceans, climate, and coasts.

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center monitors drought and forecasts the outlook for the rain and snow to come. Long-term aridification is decreasing water availability across the West – especially in the Colorado River Basin, in its worst drought for 1,200 years.

*11. Will you commit the resources necessary to maintain NOAA's key role in understanding drought and managing water scarcity?*

Answer: NOAA's role in understanding, forecasting, and communicating drought and other water security issues is vital to the American public. If confirmed, I will work to accelerate the application of cutting-edge science into real-time forecasting, improve collaboration between researchers and forecasters, and ultimately deliver more accurate and timely information to the public.

Since January 2025, NOAA and its National Weather Service have seen drastic reductions in force, which reduces our ability to forecast extreme weather.

*12. What steps would you take to ensure that NOAA continues to invest in workforce development—including through its Cooperative Institutes and academic partnerships—to conduct scientific research or support operational capabilities?*

Answer: If confirmed, I will evaluate our base of expertise, to ensure that NOAA can be a global leader in science by creating an environment where our researchers are empowered, valued, and able to deliver cutting-edge results for the American people. This includes working with stakeholders in workforce development. Workforce development will be supported through NOAA's continued investments in foundational science and technology, aiming to train experts needed for our modernized forecasting.

The United States' ability to accurately forecast extreme weather can help communities avoid catastrophe and save lives. Natural disasters cost the U.S. over \$182 billion in damages last year alone.

*13. Will you commit to restoring and updating NOAA's database managed by the National Center for Environmental Information that tracks natural disasters that cause over \$1 billion in damages?*

Answer: If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that the data NCEI is collecting and managing will be made publicly available and kept up to date.

*14. Given recent efforts to restrict or eliminate access to key NOAA databases, will you commit to restoring public access to scientific data and halting any further attempts to obscure, delete, or withhold information from the public?*

Answer: I remain committed to maintaining accessibility of ocean information in support of defense, maritime navigation, commerce, public health and safety, weather forecasting, fisheries, marine conservation and protected areas, and ocean and Great Lakes resource management. In 2019, under my leadership, NOAA unveiled the Big Data Project, now called NOAA Open Data Dissemination, that improved public access to all NOAA data through partnerships with cloud service providers.

*15. Is our ability to forecast natural disasters an economic and national security imperative?*

Answer: Yes.

NOAA's Fire Weather Testbed, based in Boulder, CO, helps increase wildfire resilience by researching and testing the use of monitoring technologies to become operational for land managers and first responders.

*16. How will you ensure NOAA continues to play a key role in advancing research and mitigation strategies to prevent wildfires?*

Answer: My thoughts continue to be with the people of Colorado who have suffered from past wildfires and those currently impacted in Chaffee County and elsewhere. If confirmed, my goal is to accelerate the application of cutting-edge science into real-time forecasting, improve collaboration between researchers and forecasters, and ultimately deliver more accurate and timely information to the public.

NOAA's services help regions conserve water, farmers increase crops yields, and land managers maintain or cultivate natural resources. Recent reports indicate the Secretary of Commerce is reviewing every federal award valued at more than \$100,000. Scientists have warned that awards are frozen during this review, at times simply because the term 'sustainability' appears in a program title or project description.

*17. In light of recent freezes to federal grants administered by NOAA, what does the term “sustainability” mean to you? Please describe how you view NOAA’s mission with respect to sustainability.*

Answer: "Sustainability" means resource longevity and economic viability, primarily achieved through core scientific assessment, monitoring, and management advice.

*18. How will you ensure NOAA’s academic and research partnerships are not jeopardized by administrative delays or political interference, and that these vital collaborations remain uninterrupted and well-supported?*

Answer: I recognize the critical importance of timely and affective contract and grant execution to NOAA's mission. Following the Administration's Executive Orders on procurement and contracting, the Department of Commerce has implemented an updated review process for contracts and grants, including those over \$100,000. I am committed to working closely with the Department to ensure that this process protects integrity, while also allowing NOAA to carry out its responsibilities.

NOAA and many scientific researchers rely on spectrum to capture space-based observations of the Earth through remote sensing. Various spectrum frequencies are allocated to federal agencies, including NOAA, and used to monitor the on-orbit location of satellites and communicate key datasets from space to scientists and forecasters here on Earth.

*19. Do you believe NOAA has access to the necessary spectrum frequencies without interference from commercial users?*

Answer: Ensuring that NOAA has continued access to frequencies for transmitting data without interference is extremely critical.

NOAA and the National Weather Service provide essential aviation weather data and analysis for use by the FAA, pilots, and air traffic controllers. This information can have far-reaching impacts and can make the difference between deciding it's safe enough to take off, choosing to stay on the ground due to incoming weather, or making mid-flight decisions about altitude or direction.

*20. How will you ensure that NOAA maintains all the resources necessary to continue to provide this vital service that impacts the safety of so many people every day?*

Answer: If confirmed, I will immediately begin working with the National Weather Service and NOAA Office of Human Capital Services to ensure we have adequate staffing to effectively carry out its core, life-saving mission and strategic priorities.

As required by the first Trump Administration, Space Policy Directive-3 required the Department of Defense to begin transitioning the collection and dissemination of space situational awareness (SSA) information and space traffic coordination (STC) responsibilities to the Department of Commerce. On a bipartisan basis, Congress has appropriated funds to the

Office of Space Commerce within NOAA to develop the necessary capabilities, in partnership with private sector entities, to improve SSA on-orbit to avoid collisions and increase U.S. competitiveness in space. NOAA has continued this work by developing the Traffic Coordination System for Space (TraCSS) in line with Congressional intent.

*21. Do you support the Office of Space Commerce continuing this work in managing TraCSS as required under SPD-3? Yes or no?*

Answer: I am a strong advocate for American leadership in space and the role of the Office of Space Commerce. I believe that robust government-commercial partnerships are essential for space situational awareness, aligning with Congressional intent and Space Policy Directive 3 (SPD-3), and I will ensure that NOAA's investments in these programs are effectively leveraged.

*22. Do you believe increasing amounts of space debris and traffic from orbiting satellites in space requires more, or less, SSA? Yes or no?*

Answer: Space situational awareness will remain essential for safety sustainability and continued growth of the U.S. commercial space sector.

*23. Do you believe, in addition to SSA, the United States could benefit from developing technologies that can remove or remediate existing space debris? Yes or no?*

Answer: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on the escalating challenge of debris in increasingly congested low earth orbits and any potential technologies to remove debris.

*24. In your view, what are the tradeoffs and potential consequences of a proposal to migrate TraCSS from NOAA to a private operator?*

Answer: Technologies in the commercial space sector are rapidly evolving changing the scope of tradeoffs. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on finding an optimum balance of capabilities.

*25. If confirmed, do you believe the Office of Space Commerce could benefit from additional appropriations, personnel, and resources? Yes or no?*

Answer: If confirmed, I will work to support the safety, sustainably, and continued growth of the U.S. commercial space sector, including via the Office of Space Commerce.

NOAA reviews and approves license applications for satellite operators who wish to carry out remote sensing activities to observe the Earth from space through authorities granted by Congress and carried out by the Commercial Remote Sensing Regulatory Affairs (CRSRA) division within NOAA's Office of Space Commerce. Part of CRSRA's review process ensures licensed remote sensing activities meet U.S. objectives and satisfy treaty obligations the U.S. committed to under the Outer Space Treaty.

For in-space activities, NOAA reviews applications for remote sensing licenses, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reviews applications for spectrum frequencies, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reviews applications for launch and reentry licenses. As innovation in space continues to rapidly advance, certain emerging in-space activities may not neatly fall under the regulatory purview of a single federal agency with jurisdiction over in-space activities. This has reinvigorated a debate around whether “Mission Authorization” authorities should be granted to a federal entity to promote U.S. leadership in space and maintain compliance under the Outer Space Treaty.

*26. Do you believe NOAA, through the Office of Space Commerce, is equipped and prepared to carry out “mission authorization” responsibilities, if provided by Congress? Yes or no?*

Answer: The Office of Space Commerce is well-positioned to carry out mission authorization responsibilities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this topic to increase business certainty, investment prospects, and eliminate inconsistencies.

*27. If NOAA, through the Office of Space Commerce, is granted Mission Authorization responsibilities, which emerging activities do you believe this licensing framework could apply to? Should those activities be specifically prescribed by Congress (e.g. operating a commercial space station, conducting active debris remediation, etc.), or should NOAA be granted the flexibility to define the scope of the licensing framework by a set of flexible criteria?*

Answer: If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and across the Administration on the scope of applicable activities.

*28. If NOAA, through the Office of Space Commerce, is granted Mission Authorization responsibilities, will you commit to transparency and close coordination during the review process with federal agencies and private entities?*

Answer: Yes.

*29. As with most licensing frameworks, review processes and predictable timelines are prescribed in statute and in regulation. Proposals have been introduced to create a “presumption of approval” within a Mission Authorization framework to allow a private entity to simply carry out an in-space activity under a Mission Authorization framework if the federal government does not respond to, or approve, a license within a certain timeline. What perspectives or concerns would you have with a “presumption of approval” provision if it were considered by Congress as part of a Mission Authorization framework?*

Answer: The “presumption of approval” with the Office of Space Commerce’s commercial remote sensing process has enabled NOAA to conduct regulatory reform and reduce permitting timelines consistent with President Trump’s Space Policy Directive 2. This will best promote U.S. competitiveness through an open and transparent regulatory framework with clearly defined regulatory responsibilities and timelines and is made possible by close engagement with the commercial space sector.

**SENATOR JOHN FETTERMAN (D-PA)**

1. Dr. Jacobs, thank you for talking with me during the hearing about NOAA's pending designation of parts of Lake Erie as a marine sanctuary. I appreciated your positive response during the hearing. Will you commit again to work with me and my office to expeditiously finalize Lake Erie's designation as a national marine sanctuary if confirmed?

Answer: I appreciate your questions. Lake Erie is a special place. If confirmed, I will work with your office on Lake Erie when possible.

2. I am concerned with the National Weather Service's lack of meteorologists across the country, and most of all for the NWS office overseeing Lake Erie not having a meteorologist. If confirmed, you'll have to hire a significant number of staff across the country. Will you prioritize filling the meteorologist position, and other crucial staff positions, to support safety in the Lake Erie region?

Answer: If confirmed, I will immediately begin working with the National Weather Service and NOAA Office of Human Capital Services to ensure we have adequate staffing to effectively carry out its core, life-saving mission and strategic priorities.