

# Bill to improve weather forecasts heads to president's desk

April 5 2017, by Matthew Daly

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The National Weather Service would have to boost research—including some from private companies—to improve forecasts and storm warnings under a bill headed to the president's desk.

Lawmakers said the [bill](#) should save lives by giving residents more time to prepare for hurricanes, tornadoes and other deadly storms.

The bill would require the [weather](#) service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to advance research on high-tech forecasts and computer models, with an emphasis on accuracy and longer warning times for major weather events.

"Americans along the East Coast have unfortunately seen first-hand how devastating hurricanes can be," said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., one of the bill's co-sponsors. "Providing more accurate tracking and intensity forecasts will allow people to better prepare for the safety of their families, homes and businesses."

Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla., focused on twisters that have ravaged his state and others in the aptly named Tornado Alley.

"The loss of life from deadly tornadoes is a stark reminder we can do better," Lucas said. A longer lead time to prepare for a tornado can mean the difference between life and death, he and other lawmakers said.

The House approved the bill by voice vote Tuesday, six days after the

Senate backed the measure. The bill now goes to President Donald Trump.

The 97-page bill focuses on a range of weather forecasting, from hurricanes to tsunamis and long-range forecasts used by farmers and utilities. One section would authorize "technology transfers" between the weather service and private sector weather companies and universities to improve forecasting data.

"With more and better options, we can finally make needed improvements to our weather forecasting capabilities," said Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, chairman of the House Science Committee.

"We cannot stop a tsunami or a hurricane, but better forecasts and better warnings will save lives and livelihoods," said Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii.

The Trump administration has proposed cutting NOAA's funding by 16 percent, but maintains National Weather Service forecasting capabilities by investing more than \$1 billion.

The budget proposal would eliminate funding for a variety of NOAA programs, including external research, coastal management and "coastal resilience," which seeks to help coastal areas withstand major storms and rising seas.

"Now is not the time to cut ocean science, when we need it most," said Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash.

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