

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128

Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Grimm,

As the National Weather Service (NWS) faces severe understaffing in offices across the country, I write to inquire about current operations at NWS Austin/San Antonio and plans for continued operations in the event of further staff vacancies, extreme weather events, and proposed budget cuts to NOAA. Before the beginning of the Trump Administration, NWS Austin/San Antonio had an 11% vacancy rate. With recent departures of the Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Science and Operations Officer, and Observing Program Leader, the local office now has a 22% vacancy rate. This is critical understaffing.

Increasing instances of triple-digit temperatures, fire-related red flag warnings, and flash floods all require timely notice by NWS to protect Central Texas families. As the worsening climate crisis exacerbates temperatures and disasters, Austin faces extreme weather risks, especially in the increasingly long summers. A 22% vacancy rate at the local NWS jeopardizes the timeliness of forecasts and warnings on which the community relies.

Understaffing is not unique to Austin. NWS Austin/San Antonio is one of the 52 out of 122 forecasting offices with a vacancy rate above 20%, while an additional eight offices have such a high vacancy rate that they cannot maintain 24/7/365 coverage. At least ten weather balloon release sites have limited or suspended launches due to personnel cuts. To manage such severe understaffing, NOAA is now offering to pay for moving expenses for staff to transfer to critical-need offices.

To understand how NOAA plans to maintain constant and complete coverage of weather forecasting and warnings, both across the country and in Austin/San Antonio, please provide answers to the following questions by June 2, 2025:

1. Confirm the current vacancy rate at NWS Austin/San Antonio as of May 20, 2025 and as of January 20, 2025.

2. What steps are being taken, if any, to ensure requested transfers do not worsen understaffing at other offices?
3. Should NOAA not fill the current 155 critical vacancies with transfers by its internal goal of May 27, 2025, what steps will the agency take to fill these roles?
4. Have any services at the NWS Austin/San Antonio office changed or degraded following staff departures since January 20, 2025?
5. What plan for continuity of operations is currently in effect at NWS Austin/San Antonio to manage services with critical understaffing?
6. In the event of an extreme weather event, is NWS Austin/San Antonio adequately staffed to provide full, constant forecasting and warning services?
7. What plan for continuity of operations is in place for if vacancies exceed the current rate? At what rate will NWS Austin/San Antonio be unable to maintain critical services?
8. If enacted, how will the Trump Administration's proposed \$209 million cut to procurement of weather satellites and infrastructure affect forecast operations at NWS Austin/San Antonio?

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

CC:
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