

ADAM B. SCHIFF  
UNITED STATES SENATOR  
CALIFORNIA

112 HART SENATE  
OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-3841

[schiff.senate.gov](http://schiff.senate.gov)

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

### COMMITTEES

JUDICIARY  
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
FISHERIES, WATER, AND WILDLIFE

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY

SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

May 13, 2025

Howard Lutnick  
Secretary of Commerce  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Laura Grimm  
Acting Secretary  
NOAA  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

I write today to express my strong opposition to ending the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Extreme Weather Database Program, as well as the administration's layoffs of NOAA meteorologists. In February 2025, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) began mass layoffs at NOAA, including hundreds of weather forecasters. On May 8, 2025, the administration announced it is retiring the NOAA Extreme Weather Database Program,<sup>1</sup> which has served as a critical data source for tracking the cost of natural disasters from wildfires to hurricanes since 1980. This is another self-inflicted critical setback to the federal government's ability to keep the American people informed and safe during extreme weather events. This reckless action jeopardizes American lives and will undermine local economies, and I urge you to immediately reverse this decision.

The elimination of this database undermines transparency and will severely hinder the ability of policymakers, companies, researchers, and taxpayers to track the impacts of natural disasters and plan and model for future extreme weather events. For example, researchers who rely on NOAA data for climate risk financial modeling will no longer be able to extend damage trend analyses. NOAA's data collection and analysis are essential to monitoring very dynamic weather conditions in California and the rest of the country. This work is necessary for the development of risk models for all segments of the U.S. capital and insurance markets.

The NOAA extreme weather database has been used to track the cost of extreme weather and climate events since 1980. According to the database, there have been 403 weather related disasters since 1980, totaling more than \$2.945 trillion in damages.<sup>3</sup> The disaster database is uniquely valuable because it pulls data from proprietary and non-public data sources that are otherwise inaccessible to researchers (such as reinsurance loss estimates and private claims databases), which also makes this database incredibly difficult to replicate. All this critical information on damage trends, especially at regional scales, is now archived and will not be

updated beyond 2024. Because of this, the estimated billions of dollars in damages caused by the Los Angeles wildfires would not be tracked or reported to the public.

The termination of this database also suggests that this program may have been targeted because it shows the American public just how much climate change has been fueling more frequent billion-dollar weather disasters. If this is the case, it is disturbing that the administration would prefer to keep the public in the dark about the effects of climate change and hinder the country's ability to prevent and mitigate the human, economic, and environmental costs of extreme weather events.

In general, NOAA supports public safety by providing daily forecasts and weather warnings, maintaining a nationwide network of Doppler weather radars, and improving warning lead times for hurricanes and tornados. For example, between 2000 and 2023 for Atlantic storms, NOAA's National Hurricane Center decreased its 72-hour track forecast errors by 64%.<sup>1</sup> Currently, there are more than 90 vacancies among staff responsible for repairing the NWS Doppler radars.<sup>2</sup>

As the 2025 hurricane season approaches, 30 of 122 weather forecast offices at NWS lack their most experienced weather experts, the chief meteorologists<sup>2</sup>. This includes offices in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. For example, there is no manager in place at the Houston-Galveston forecast office in Texas, and Tampa Bay, Florida, also lacks a chief meteorologist in office, a location that was hit hard by Hurricane Milton in 2024.

For the reasons listed above, I urge you to reconsider your decision to end the extreme weather database and your efforts to reduce staffing at NOAA and NWS. The webpage for the extreme weather database now includes a banner that states: "In alignment with evolving priorities, statutory mandates, and staffing changes, NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) will no longer be updating the Billion Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters product." This does not provide sufficient explanation to the public or to Congress for the administration's decision to terminate the database. Consequently, I request a full explanation for why this database is being terminated, as well as written responses to the following questions no later than May 23, 2025:

1. Will NOAA continue to track the cost of natural disasters in the absence of this database?
2. If so, where will this data be made available for public use?
3. Which statutory mandates is the webpage banner referenced above referring to?
4. Are the staffing cuts executed by DOGE responsible for this decision?
5. Was this database program targeted because it illustrates with empirical scientific evidence that climate change is fueling the cost and frequency of extreme weather events?

At a time of increasing wildfires and other natural disasters, now is not the time to throttle efforts to understand, track, and model extreme weather events. Extreme weather events are hurting constituencies all across the country, and the damage they cause does not adhere to any political boundaries. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" written in a smaller, more legible script, and the last name "Schiff" in a larger, more stylized cursive. The middle initial "B." is written in a simple, clear font between the first and last names.