Dear Chairman Mikulski, Chairman Wolf, Ranking Member Hutchinson and Ranking Member Fattah:

As you begin to conference the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY 2012) Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill, please keep in mind the unique value of the atmospheric and related sciences to the economic health and safety of the American people. As a nation of weather-sensitive industries, businesses, and individuals, we cannot afford diminished weather forecasts, Earth observing capabilities, or other life-saving information that can only be provided through atmospheric research and the application of that research to societal needs. On behalf of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, a consortium of 77 research universities, I urge you to fund basic and applied geosciences research and research applications within NSF, NOAA and NASA Earth Science at the highest funding levels possible as you conference the FY 2012 CJS appropriations legislation.

We understand that Congress is grappling with the nation's significant fiscal problems and that the pressure to reduce the federal deficit has placed a strain on all discretionary spending. But weather events in this country are among the most volatile in the world and have significant economic impacts. Increasing our knowledge of these phenomena and improving our ability to monitor them is of the utmost importance. More than 75 percent of natural disasters around the world are triggered directly or indirectly by weather and climate events. This past year has illustrated the relationship between weather and the high costs of U.S. natural disasters as major snowstorms and Hurricane Irene pummeled the East Coast, record-breaking droughts and wildfires devastated Texas and the Southwest,
tornados of epic proportions destroyed communities in Missouri and Alabama, and record flooding along the Mississippi watershed inundated farms and rural communities. While scientific knowledge of the atmosphere and accurate forecasting cannot prevent natural disasters, they provide critical advance warning and mitigate the economic damage and loss of life caused by severe weather and long term weather trends resulting in prolonged events such as drought.

Fluctuations in routine weather and seasonal changes have a major impact on Americans' mobility, patterns of behavior and on the vitality of the economy. Every American in all 50 states is affected by these events. In the U.S., more than a quarter of our annual gross national product (more than $2 trillion) is sensitive to weather and climate events such as hurricanes, tornados, forest fires, flooding, heavy snows, and drought. In fact, some scientists have estimated that the influence of routine weather—not severe weather events, but routine daily weather—can affect 3-4 percent of the entire U.S. gross domestic product. With better knowledge of the cycles and patterns of weather and the atmosphere, we can improve our health, safety, economy, environment, transportation system efficiency, and national security.

I appreciate your attention to this recommendation for FY 2012 federal science agencies and thank you for your hard work in addressing the nation's difficult budget challenges.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Anthes
President
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research