1. UCAR & Weather Coalition request comments on proposal for U.S. Commission on Weather Policy

This September, UCAR and the Weather Coalition joined a panel of weather community experts in the House Science Committee hearing room on Capitol Hill to discuss the recent release of the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) report *Weather Services for the Nation: Becoming Second to None*. At that event, UCAR President Tom Bogdan responded to the NAS report by proposing the creation of the nation’s first Congressionally chartered U.S. Commission on Weather Policy. Such a commission would be charged with examining the overarching challenges and opportunities facing the weather enterprise, especially those issues which are larger than any one sector, agency, or organization in the enterprise, and providing a set of actionable recommendations and funding priorities.

How might a Commission be governed and operate, and what will it accomplish? Although we are gathering input and ideas from the community that will eventually inform a U.S. Weather Commission should it be established, no formal plans or charter have been agreed upon. The community is still coming to consensus on the path forward. In the near future, the community will begin to develop a draft charter that describes scope, governance, and purpose. And while there are plenty of good reasons to support a Weather Commission, one of the most important is that a commission’s stature could elevate our community’s standing and increase the level of attention to our priorities in Washington, which is more critical than ever given the fiscal austerity that lies ahead.

Since the September event, Tom and the co-chairs of the Weather Coalition have spoken to numerous boards, lists, committees, and other groups and individuals to introduce the U.S. Weather Commission idea. The proposal appears to be resonating with many individuals and gaining momentum. We welcome you to be a part of this important community conversation as well, as it continues to unfold over the next several months.

You can learn more about the U.S. Weather Commission and to weigh in with your views at our website [http://weathercoalition.org/](http://weathercoalition.org/). In addition to UCAR President Tom Bogdan’s open letter to the community and the Weather Commission Frequently Asked Questions, you will find a dedicated message board to provide an open and public venue for your thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

2. Update on automatic sequestrations set to take effect on Jan. 2, 2013

A special thank you to Abby Benson, Assistant Vice President for Research and Federal Relations at the University of Colorado, for the [NEWScience Policy](http://newsciencepolicy.org/) update (appended below) about the status of negotiations in Washington around the "fiscal cliff," including automatic sequestrations which are set to take effect on Jan. 2, 2013. If Congress and the President do not agree on a plan to replace current budget law, then the science agencies and all other non-defense discretionary federal accounts face an 8.2 percent across-the-board funding cut. UCAR has teamed with the rest of the science community to urge Congress to find a solution to balancing the federal budget that spares further cuts to federal research & development dollars, which is the lifeblood of our universities and laboratories and forms the backbone of America's innovation economy.

With only three weeks left before the end of the year, no discernible progress has been made on how to avoid the "fiscal cliff" the country is expected to face on January 1st when individual tax breaks expire and massive spending cuts (a.k.a. sequestration) kick in. Democrats and Republicans traded proposals...
last week, but each was met with about the same amount of enthusiasm (i.e., none) by the other party. The Democratic proposal would raise over $1.5 trillion in taxes through select individual tax rate increases and tax reform, and cut spending by $400 billion. The Republican proposal would increase revenues by $800 billion from tax reform alone, provide $600 billion in savings from entitlement reform, and cut $300 billion in spending cuts. President Obama and Speaker Boehner reportedly met at the White House over the weekend to discuss the fiscal cliff, and their delegates will surely continue their negotiations this week.

While any final deal is likely to come down to a battle over individual tax rates vs. entitlement reform, it is important to note that both proposal include additional spending cuts beyond what was agreed to in the **Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011**. The good news is that the White House has consistently said they won’t support further cuts to research and education spending, a point the President reiterated last week in a tweet, “Open to more smart cuts but not in areas like R&D, edu that help growth & jobs, or hurt vulnerable (eg disabled) – bo.” That being said, if a final deal hinges on protecting spending vs. protecting benefits provided by entitlement programs like Medicare and Medicaid, it is not at all clear that protecting spending would win out.

The research community remains active on the advocacy front. The American Association for the Advancement of Science sent a [letter](https://www.aaas.org/) signed by 126 partner organizations to the White House and Congress last week urging “both branches of government to work together to achieve a bipartisan compromise that avoids the fiscal cliff and moves the country on to sound fiscal footing without sacrificing our nation’s crucial investments in science and technology.” AAAS has also set up a [website](https://www.aaas.org/) with several resources related to the impact of sequestration on R&D, as well as a [website](https://www.aaas.org/) where they have urged their members to upload videos and other messages about the impact of sequestration.

The group United for Medical Research released an infographic titled: [Medical Research in Jeopardy](https://www.unitedformediaresearch.org/), which provides “a visual representation to the devastating impact an 8.2% cut to NIH from sequestration will have on the medical research ecosystem and U.S.’s global competitiveness.” The American Chemical Society also created a [website](https://www.acs.org/) that their members can use to contact members of Congress to express concerns about sequestration’s impact on science.

Students across the country are also making their voices heard. A [letter](https://www.aps.org/) organized by the American Physical Society and signed by 6,200 students, with a focus on the negative impacts of sequestration to innovation, was hand delivered to lawmakers across the country last week. Another student organization called [Stand With Science](https://www.standwithscience.org/), first created in 2011 by a group of MIT students, also launched round two of their grass-roots efforts to get students to sign onto a letter outlining the impact of sequestration. This campaign is a follow-up effort to a first letter that garnered 10,000 signatures back in November 2011.