

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6371

<http://science.house.gov>

September 24, 2026

The Honorable Dr. Neil Jacobs
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Administrator Jacobs:

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is warning of a potentially historic Super El Niño, with a “greater than 90% chance of a very strong” event and a 75% chance it exceeds the strength of every El Niño recorded since 1950.¹² The consequences of this Super El Niño could be severe: extreme weather, crop failures, flooding and drought, worsening global hunger, and significant economic losses that cost trillions³.

This warning comes as President Trump has weakened the very agency responsible for forecasting and preparing Americans for these threats. The National Weather Service (NWS) workforce was cut by roughly 15 percent last year by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), including hundreds of experienced employees.⁴ Delays in rehiring staff have disrupted the collection of critical weather data. At the same time, NOAA halted its Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters database, which tracks the frequency and economic costs of extreme weather events.⁵⁶ These choices make us alarmed that NOAA may lack the capacity to predict, inform the public, and respond to the extreme weather caused by the Super El Niño.

With droughts, hurricanes, storms, crop failures, business closures, and other serious events, a future Super El Niño event could wreak havoc. The economic cost alone could be devastating.

¹ https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/lanina/enso_evolution-status-fcsts-web.pdf

² https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.shtml

³ https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/el_nino/impacts-of-el-nino

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/national-weather-service-hurricane-season-less-experienced-staff-missing-data/>

⁵ <https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/news/billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters>

⁶ <https://amo.house.gov/press-release/science-space-and-technology-committee-leaders-ammo-sykes-lead-64-colleagues-in-demanding-trump-keep-tracking-weather-disasters-that-cause-more-than-1-billion-in-damage>

The 1998 Super El Niño caused an estimated \$5.7 trillion in global income losses.⁷ Analysis from the Peterson Institute for International Economics predicts that a Super El Niño event will cost the international economy an estimated minimum of \$7.2 trillion over six years.⁸

During previous El Niño events, temperatures and precipitation anomalies were observed across the United States, with conditions in the Eastern Pacific leading to above-average hurricane activity on the West Coast.⁹ These conditions disrupt the economy, causing crop losses, delayed travel, and business closures across the country.

The United States cannot afford to be caught flat-footed. The destruction caused by a Super El Niño could cascade to negatively impact U.S. interests, security, and commerce. In 2015, an El Niño left up to 100 million people food insecure. The World Food Program estimates this Super El Niño could push at least 49 million people into acute food insecurity by the end of 2027.¹⁰

NOAA must take these concerns seriously. NOAA must have the personnel, data, research, and resources necessary to warn Americans and help communities prepare before disaster strikes. Preparation for potentially historic weather events must remain a high priority.

We respectfully request answers to the following questions by October 9, 2026.

1. What specific steps is NOAA taking to prepare for a potentially historic Super El Niño and its impacts on the United States?
2. Does NOAA have sufficient staffing, forecasting capacity, and data collection capabilities to monitor, predict, and provide products for Super El Niño-related extreme weather? If not, what additional resources are needed from Congress to ensure the United States is prepared for the potential impacts of this Super El Niño?
3. How have staffing reductions and other recent cuts affected NOAA's ability to forecast, monitor, and support the public's preparation for extreme weather? Please identify any forecasting, data-collection, or product development capabilities that have been reduced or disrupted.
4. What is NOAA's estimate of the potential economic impact of this Super El Niño on the United States? What data and models will NOAA use to assess those impacts?
5. How will NOAA track the economic damage caused by extreme weather now that the Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters database has been discontinued?

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Josh Schneider and Kristi Parrott with the Committee's Minority staff and Christina Rankin with Representative Amo's staff. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

⁷ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adf2983>

⁸ <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2026/el-nino-could-drag-down-global-economy-almost-1-trillion-or-least-7>

⁹ <https://abcnews.com/US/potentially-historic-el-nino-takes-shape-reaching-us/story?id=135615867>

¹⁰ <https://www.wfp.org/news/world-food-programme-ramps-preparedness-and-response-plans-el-nino-threatens-push-tens>

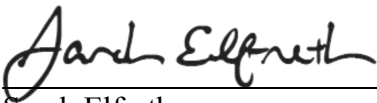
Sincerely,



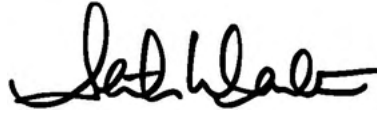
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



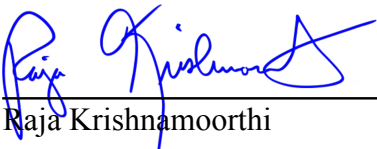
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



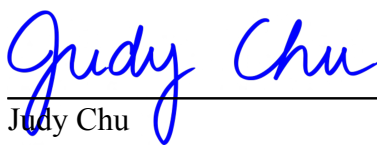
George Whitesides
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



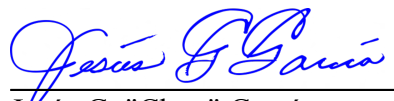
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



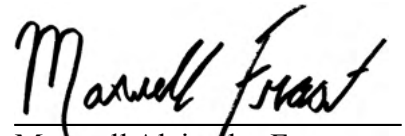
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



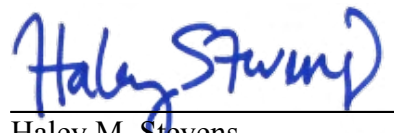
Sylvia R. Garcia
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



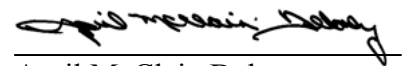
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Mike Levin
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
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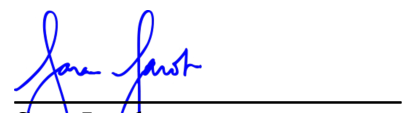
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



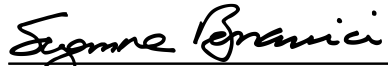
Jasmine Crockett
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Val Hoyle
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Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



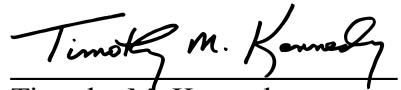
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



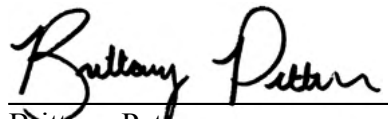
Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



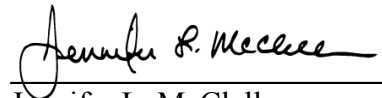
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



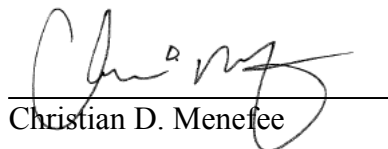
Timothy M. Kennedy
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Brittany Pettersen
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Jennifer L. McClellan
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Christian D. Menefee
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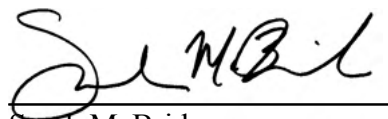
Rashida Tlaib
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Deborah K. Ross
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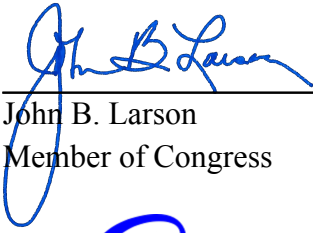
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



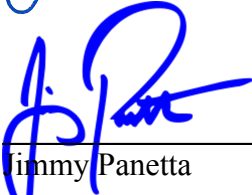
Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



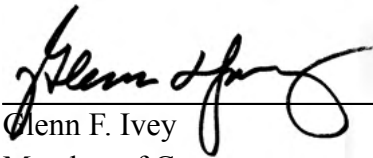
Frederica S. Wilson
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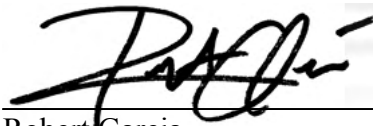
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress



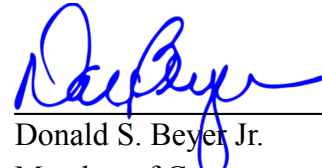
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



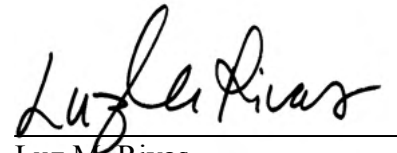
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Luz M. Rivas
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