

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today spoke on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in opposition to two Republican amendments that would strip funding for hurricane prediction and research from a disaster relief bill intended to respond to Hurricane Sandy.

Holt, who is a research scientist and the co-chair of the Congressional Research and Development Caucus, has long highlighted the importance of federal support for R&D to America's ability to predict and prepare for major storms.

In opposing the Broun Amendment, which would strike funding to the National Weather Service's Ground Readiness Project, Holt said:

"This misguided amendment by the gentleman from Georgia would strike funding for the National Weather Service's Ground Readiness Program.

"The Ground Readiness Program means that weather satellite signals can be collected on the ground and those data can be used in operational models and forecasts. This satellite data is critical for forecasting hurricanes.

"In fact, the National Weather Service used data from these NOAA satellites to predict accurately the scope and the path of Hurricane Sandy.

"This amount is a relatively small dollar amount in the overall disaster relief bill, but this amendment is of outsized importance in its misguided intent.

"A recent study showed that, without the polar satellite data from the weather models, forecasters would have said Sandy would stay out at sea – would not have hit the mid-Atlantic coast. Imagine how much worse the storm damage would have been if the emergency management officials said it would never make landfall. It is hard to overestimate how important accurate forecasts are. Let's accelerate the program, not slow it down.

“You know, it is completely nonsensical to impair the ability of the National Weather Service to predict accurately. This is reminiscent of that ludicrous proposal a few years ago that we abolish the National Weather Service because there is a successful private, cable Weather Channel.

“I urge my colleagues to reject this misguided amendment.”

In opposing the Flores Amendment, which would strike funding to the NOAA Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program, Holt said:

“I rise in opposition to an amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas. It is a misguided amendment that would strike funding from NOAA’s Regional Ocean Partnership grant program. These grants help scientists understand where and how the shoreline has changed, evaluate the long-term effects of storm damage, and prepare mitigation plans for future severe weather events.

“The whole point is to rebuild better and smarter. The Flores Amendment eliminates such funding for coastal mitigation, which means Congress would lose the opportunity to ensure the money is spent on recovery from this disaster in a smart way that makes coastal communities stronger and safer.

“It is nonsensical to impair the ability of NOAA to prepare properly for hurricanes in an emergency appropriations bill designed to respond to a hurricane.

“I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this misguided amendment, and I thank my good friend from New Jersey (Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen) for all the thought that has gone into his amendment.”

Final votes on both amendments are expected later this evening.