



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

McPherson Governmental Campus

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District 1 - Craig Curry, Commissioner
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June 2, 2025

The Honorable Nick DiCeglie, Chairman
Budget Conference - Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development/Transportation & Economic Development
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

RE: Funding for weather radar gaps to improve public safety

Dear Chairman DiCeglie:

I am writing to highlight the significant impact of low-level weather gaps on communities like mine, across the state. As a County Commissioner, I have seen firsthand how these gaps, caused by limited radar coverage between National Weather Service (NWS) radars, hinder our ability to effectively respond to weather events. Weather gaps occur as the Earth curves away from a static weather radar location; therefore, the further someone lives away from an NWS radar, the higher it is scanning over their head. Quite simply, the nearest NWS radar is scanning over Marion County at approximately 8k feet, meaning if any weather comes through the area at a lower altitude, it cannot be detected on radar, leaving us very exposed. Across Florida, nearly 8 million people live in these weather gaps, disproportionately affecting rural and vulnerable populations. Additionally, because urban residents tend to travel outside of the cities for recreation, seasonal population explosions also increase vulnerability.

These gaps can result in dangerous situations where weather impacts are unexpected, sometimes occurring with no warning, meaning we can only react as the weather scenario is upon us. In many cases, we rely on storm spotters, putting first responders and volunteers at risk, to report weather that is not visible on radar. The gaps in our area have been well documented, and many have tried to lobby for solutions. While the NWS plans to update its existing radar technology by 2040, there are no current plans to address these low-level gaps, which would require new federally owned radars. Instead, they rely on private partners to supplement their network and are simply procuring gap-filling radar data. I urge the state to explore these options and immediately fund solutions for gap-filling data, ensuring that all communities have equitable radar coverage and the same opportunity to prepare and respond effectively. Further, any solution would need to integrate with the current NWS infrastructure for emergency warnings and alerts. Thank you for your time, and please feel free to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bryant
Chairman
Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Empowering Marion for Success