

Peters & Slotkin Press National Weather Service for Answers on Lack of Tornado Watch Alert for Southwest Michigan Tornadoes

Letter Sent to NWS Director Following Deadly Tornadoes on March 6th

FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senators Gary Peters (MI) and Elissa Slotkin (MI) are pressing the National Weather Service (NWS) for answers after the agency issued no tornado watch alert ahead of the four March 6, 2026 tornadoes that devastated Southwest Michigan communities, claiming the lives of four people and injuring more than 20 others. In a letter to NWS Director Ken Graham, the senators asked for clarity into what prevented NWS from issuing the watch and what changes are necessary to improve NWS' ability to provide timely and accurate forecasting, predictions, and alerts moving forward.

“We mourn for those who lost their lives to this storm, and we stand fully prepared to work with the impacted families and communities to begin the process of rebuilding and recovering,” **Peters and Slotkin wrote**. “At the same time, we seek to better understand how this tragic event unfolded and what changes are required to better protect public safety and avoid such tragic loss of life during future extreme weather events.”

The storm included four separate tornadoes across Cass, St. Joseph, Calhoun, and Branch Counties. The Branch County tornado, in particular, was the strongest tornado to hit Michigan in nearly fifty years, reaching max speeds of 160 mph. Despite the storm's severity, NWS reportedly did not issue a tornado watch alert prior to the first tornado touching down. The senators asked Director Graham to clarify what led to NWS' failure to adequately warn the public and if the Trump Administration's self-inflicted staffing shortages, which have impacted Michigan's five forecasting offices, contributed to this outcome.

The senators asked, “Was a lack of staff and/or resources a contributing factor to NWS's inability to issue a tornado watch alert ahead of the March 6 tornadoes? What, if anything, would have allowed the responsible NWS offices to identify the supercell that produced these tornadoes more quickly and, in turn, issue a tornado watch alert ahead of the first touchdown?”

The senators also expressed their willingness to work alongside NWS to determine what steps can be taken to better protect Michigan communities from extreme weather events in the future.

You can read the full letter [here](#).

Peters is leading [bipartisan legislation](#) that would help ensure NWS can continue to provide 24/7 weather forecasting in communities across the United States. Specifically, the bill would exempt critical NWS positions from any executive orders imposing a hiring freeze, allowing the agency to adequately staff positions that are essential to notifying the public of extreme weather events that could be detrimental to people or property.

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