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Senator Gregg Tours New Research Facility at Mount Washington Observatory

Announces Funding for UNH Atmospheric and Weather Forecasting Research

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BARTLETT, N.H. -- A University of New Hampshire research program aimed at improving weather forecasts will benefit from new federal funding secured by U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-N.H.).

Gregg announced today that he secured \$500,000 in additional funding for the Mount Washington Observatory, bringing to total \$1 million he has secured over the last two years for construction of a new headquarters for the observatory. The new headquarters will be located in Pinkham Notch, adjacent to the Mount Washington Auto Road.

The new facility will support UNH's innovative GroundWinds atmospheric research program -- a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) -- including the LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) station, a laser measuring the motion of molecules in the air. The LIDAR project is currently working to demonstrate the feasibility of using satellite-based lasers to measure global wind speeds for improved weather forecasting and other Earth science applications. The GroundWinds project will receive an additional \$3.5 million next year.

Gregg also announced that the National Weather Service will receive \$355,000 to upgrade NOAA's weather radio by adding six new transmitters to the present one outside Concord, thus ensuring statewide reception. He was able to secure funding for these projects through NOAA.

Gregg serves as the ranking member on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary, which oversees funding for NOAA.

Gregg cited the unique weather phenomena Mount Washington experiences as the basis for its appeal to atmospheric research scientists. After touring the new facility this morning, he stated, "The opening of this new facility stands as a proud symbol for all Granite Staters. Despite record-breaking weather and the natural hazards Mount Washington presents, researchers are able to pursue pressing and innovative scientific breakthroughs related to air quality and weather forecasting. These valuable contributions have continued to bring the partnership between the university and NOAA to the forefront of air quality and weather forecasting across the nation.

"UNH was considered visionary when they first proposed this technology four years ago. A few weeks following my visit to the GroundWinds station at the Mount Washington Observatory last August, UNH successfully proved the technology works on the ground. Anybody familiar with New Hampshire and New England knows the critical need to accurately predict inclement weather. These funds will further the research needed to develop a satellite-based sensor in the near future."

Gregg continued, "Due to the unpredictability of New Hampshire's weather, there comes the need to inform us all when harsh weather is approaching. NOAA weather radio provides residents with highly-accurate weather forecasts to warn of winter storms or flash thunderstorms and will enable all Granite Staters, no matter what part of the state they live in, to better prepare for severe weather."

Paul Fitzgerald, president of the Mount Washington Observatory, noted that, "Senator Gregg has been a long-time friend of the observatory. The research building we are opening today exists because he secured funding for it. But even more important is that NOAA-funded research projects underway at the site because of his initiative already are producing results important to all Americans. For example, the GroundWinds LIDAR already has been used to actually

observe the air turbulence that results from wind passing over Mount Washington."

Berrien Moore, III, director of UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, called attention to "the enormous commitment of resources to the demonstration of the new LIDAR technology at the site. This investment opens the way for scientific studies never before possible, and the prospect of a satellite-based system to measure wind speeds around the globe for use in improving weather forecasts. It would not have happened but for Senator Gregg's commitment to technological advance, and it is happening right here in New Hampshire at the Observatory's research site."

The improvements include additional meeting space, offices and research facilities, along with steps taken to reduce dust interference. NOAA weather radio provides round-the-clock forecasts along with storm warnings as needed. At present, coverage for New Hampshire communities is restricted to only those reached by the transmitter located in Penacook, N.H. The expanded system is expected to provide full coverage from Pittsburg to Hinsdale, from the Mohawk River Valley to Seabrook.

For further information regarding the observatory, visit their web site at <http://www.mountwashington.org/index.html> or contact Paul Fitzgerald at (603) 524-4060. For more information regarding the GroundWinds LIDAR, visit its web site <http://groundwinds.sr.unh.edu/> or contact Berrien Moore at (603) 862-1766.

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