

## THE TIME HAS COME

John Nesbett Leedom  
Dallas, TX 75201

I was honored to be invited by your friend and a great leader in the weather modification effort, Mr. George Bomar, to attend the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Weather Modification Association. I have long wanted to help bring about a solution for rain to fall when and where needed. This meeting was extremely beneficial for my efforts to better understand what had been going on and was going on.

The various papers presented were very professional and the obvious experience and expertise of those who presented them was very impressive. I came away from the meeting with three major reactions:

1) Many individuals have spent years learning and developing techniques. A major theme, however, was though the technology had greatly improved, the public and government attention, and awareness and funding was still minimal.

2) It seems such an important gathering should have had some active legislators and government officials present to gather around the flag, so to speak. During my five years on the Dallas City Council and then my sixteen years in the Texas Senate, I have been invited to attend and speak to several interest groups. The general purpose of such invitations was to cement my understanding of the group's efforts and mission and thereby garner my support for the appropriate government activities and funding, if needed.

3) With all due respect, I noted that average age of most in attendance was in their 50s and 60s. (I can comment on such, as I was 79 in July of 2000). The response was that the subject had not been attracting many youths. I also noted there are no prominent universities with Weather Modification Departments.

Returning from the meeting, I decided that much could and should be done, at least in Texas and so I set about many visits.

I visited with the leading weathermen in Dallas and determined that the meteorologists, who have their own association and training, are mostly only involved in predicting the weather. Very important, however, there is no effort to modify the weather. I

called on a former Chancellor of the University of Texas, who is now Director of Research at the Pentagon and found that they also devote research effort to forecasting, which is a very important subject, but again, there is no effort to modify the weather.

By now I was coming to the conclusion that legislation should be introduced in Texas at the next session of the Texas Legislature to convene in January of 2001, to fund meteorology departments in some Texas' major institutions, such as the University of Texas, Texas A & M, Texas Tech University and perhaps others who would be interested.

Also, I believe that Texas should fund a Weather Modification Center that would coordinate and fund other research in weather modification for private institutions if they cared to create such research efforts.

I am a great believer that it takes three things to solve a problem. This problem is very clearly defined. It then takes people, ideas and money. Though my reputation is as a strong fiscal conservative, I do believe that government should do for the people what they cannot do for themselves and this problem certainly meets that requirement.

Before visiting with active Senators, however, I know it would require other institution's support and to determine that at least they would not be in opposition. I visited with a number of leaders. A meeting with the president of the University of Texas was very productive. In fact, he made a suggestion that I have now incorporated into the proposed legislation. He suggested that rather than a Meteorology Department, the department should be entitled Atmospheric Modification Department. The funding would be used to finance hiring professors (scientists), to buy equipment and provide facilities, as well as scholarships for a number of young people to enroll in the schools.

I also visited with the head of the Texas College Coordinating Board and again received a favorable reaction that something should be done and most likely could be done to bring about such

research in some of the universities and colleges of Texas. To garner support, I visited with the president of the Texas Electric Utility Company (TXU) who recognized that without water the electric utilities could not function

Since my visits with him, three smaller electric utilities in West Texas have run out of water and are using the grid to supplement their electrical needs. I advised the TXU president I was not seeking any financial support, but did hope that he would encourage their very capable lobbyist to support and assist with the passage of the legislation and encourage the legislators to vote favorably on this proposed legislation.

Likewise I met with the vice president of a major insurance company whose losses had exceeded \$100 million in the year 2000 due to the hail damage that Texas has been having. He is very supportive of efforts that might lessen the hail damage and was somewhat familiar with the efforts in Canada and other areas on hail suppression. Again, I did not request any funding support, only the assistance of their very fine lobbyist to support the passage of this new legislation for atmospheric modification. I left feeling they would.

I have since met with active Senators and at this writing believe the legislation will be filed. By the time this is printed, I am hopeful we will have made legislative progress. I believe when the legislation is submitted, it would well receive 31 co-sponsors. This would be 100% of all Texas Senators. By then I would believe there would be great public awareness and support.

The purpose of this article is to present to all weather modification practitioners a belief that now is the time to make major efforts to move forward with research and funding. The bills I am proposing will carry a financial note of millions of dollars, but it is time for Texas to step up to the plate and fund research that will release the great reservoir in the sky of its moisture. The need is great, the losses are great and human suffering is great. It is now time that we bring this to the attention of governments for funding and research and development. The public, I'm certain, will support it. Let's go forward now.



About the  
Author

Dallas native John Leedom has served in the Texas Senate continuously since 1980, alternating his in-session legislative duties with service on state committees and gubernatorial commissions promoting economic development, financial efficiency and intergovernmental cooperation. During the 1970s, he was twice elected to the Dallas City Council. He earlier chaired the Dallas County Republican Party and served as an elected member to the Texas State Republican Executive Committee.

Sen. Leedom is chairman of Dallas-based Wholesale Electronic Supply, Inc., which he co-founded in 1950. He has since served as a director of the Young Presidents' Organization, president of the National Electronic Distributor Association and president and chairman of the National Association of Wholesale/Distributors.

An electrical engineering graduate of Rice University, Leedom was elected treasurer of his freshman class and president of his senior class prior to enlisting in the U.S. Navy in 1943. As Navy officer during World War II, he directed classified communications projects at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C., simultaneously chairing the Lab's Recreation for some 5,000 military and civilian personnel.

John and his wife, Betty, reside in Dallas.