

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING

Subcommittee on Energy and Environment Status Report on the NPOESS Weather Satellite Program June 7, 2007

Statement of Subcommittee on Energy & Environment Ranking Member Bob Inglis (SC-4)

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Lampson, for holding this hearing about the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System, NPOESS. This hearing continues close oversight of this vital weather satellite program, oversight that started under Republican leadership of this Committee.

Under Republican leadership in the last Congress, this Committee held three high-profile hearings about NPOESS. In looking over the testimony for today's hearing, it appears to me that close oversight has paid off. For the most part, the program is on track under the new plan announced in June 2006.

Of course, risks remain for a satellite known as "the most complex environmental satellite system ever developed." But, the government has plans in place to address most of the risks identified by GAO. Also, the government is actively examining options to provide environmental data that we had expected from NPOESS but under the new plan we will not receive.

But, simply because things appear under control right now, I do not want to imply that the Congress, or the Administration for that matter, can back off from our close oversight of NPOESS. In fact, I believe just the opposite. Lack of oversight of the management of NPOESS, the contractor, and the many technical problems facing NPOESS all led to the June 2006 Nunn-McCurdy certification in the first place.

Those of us responsible for this program, Congress, NOAA, the Air Force, and NASA, cannot sit back and relax or we risk yet another four-year delay or doubling of costs. NPOESS today is a \$12.5 billion program. That is a lot of taxpayer money. We expect that investment to provide a series of weather satellites that are launched on time and provide data to inform everything from decisions about our military troop operations to forecasting the path of hurricanes.

Also, I expect that the interagency report on avoiding gaps in other environmental data be completed as soon as reasonably possible. The longer we wait to make a final decision on this, the greater risk we face of having a gap in data important for understanding global climate change and for seasonal forecasts of events like El Nino.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and yield back the balance of my time.