

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6371

www.science.house.gov

February 28, 2013

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
Environmental Observation & Prediction
and Deputy Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has conducted bipartisan oversight on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) and its predecessor, the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS), for well over a decade. In order to assist the Committee in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities, the Committee has engaged with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Department of Commerce Office of the Inspector General (IG) for nearly as long. The Committee has also tasked GAO with monitoring the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite System (GOES-R). Assessments and recommendations from GAO and the IG regarding the JPSS and GOES-R Programs have benefitted NOAA, the Committee, and the nation as a whole.

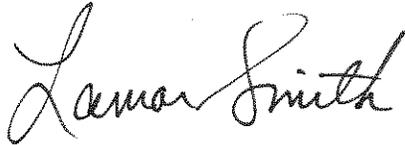
Because of these important contributions, we were surprised to hear that NOAA recently prevented GAO and IG staff from attending Program Management Council (PMC) meetings. Attendance at these meetings allowed GAO and IG staff to better understand the challenges facing the programs and provided context to technical reports. By not attending PMC meetings, GAO and the IG staff must now request additional information and briefings, further taxing NOAA program staff time. We understand that the exclusion of GAO and IG staff from PMC meetings was in response to the Independent Review Team's recommendation that program oversight be streamlined; however, that recommendation was directed at the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Information Officer, not GAO or the IG. In order to facilitate GAO and IG work, and ultimately the Committee's oversight interests, we request that NOAA once again allow GAO and IG staff to attend PMC meetings. Congress relies on information from GAO and the Commerce IG to conduct oversight of NOAA's troubled weather satellite program.

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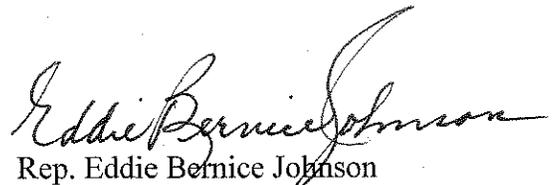
Kicking watchdogs out of program management meetings flies in the face of transparency and is counterproductive to getting these critical programs back on track.

Please confirm that GAO and IG staff will be allowed to attend future PMC meetings by March 8, 2013. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Mr. Tom Hammond, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Oversight at (202) 225-6371, or Dr. Dan Pearson of the minority staff at (202) 225-6375.

Sincerely,



Rep. Lamar Smith
Chairman



Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member



Rep. Paul Broun, M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight



Rep. Dan Maffei
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight