

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Paul Broun, M.D. (R-GA), Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
*From NPOESS to JPSS: An Update on the Nation's Restructured
Polar Weather Satellite Program*

September 23, 2011

The National Polar-orbiting Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) program was originally envisioned to reduce duplication and save \$1.3 billion dollars. Initial estimates for that program came in at \$6.5 billion for six satellites, operating in three orbits, carrying 13 instruments, with the first satellite launched around 2010. The costs of the new Joint Polar-orbiting Satellite System (JPSS) are now more than double the costs of the original program, but that doesn't fully reflect the dire straits the program is truly in. With JPSS, NOAA is only planning to operate three satellites in one orbit (one of which is technically a research satellite). If you were to add the costs of the Department of Defense (DOD) and European portions of the system, which were originally parts of NPOESS, the costs would be much higher – roughly \$17 billion when you add the Defense Weather Satellite System (DWSS), and well over \$20 billion when you add the cost of what the Europeans spent on MetOp. Aside from cost, the schedules have been delayed, and gaps in data coverage are looming.

To date, the federal government has spent over \$6 billion on the NPOESS and JPSS programs, and the only thing we have to show for it is a modified research satellite that hopefully will launch next month. In the past, the program was troubled by inter-agency bickering, overly optimistic cost estimates, lax oversight, and technical complexity. More recently, the uncertain fiscal environment has also challenged the program.

NOAA's testimony states the projected gap in services is due to "the lack of adequate, timely, and stable appropriated funds..." In my mind, if the program had actually delivered on its cost, schedule, and performance, we wouldn't be in this position. Unfortunately, we are in this position, and there is certainly enough blame to go around. Multiple Administrations and Congresses controlled by both Republicans and Democrats, numerous contractors, and multiple agencies all had a hand in this program. The new problems faced by this program are the result of a perfect storm of factors: a drastic reorganization, a scheduled ramp-up in development costs, and flat funding from Continuing Resolutions. This Committee has been consistent in both its support, and its oversight of NPOESS and JPSS. This is evidenced by the Committee's Views and Estimates that call for full funding of JPSS, and the fact that this is the Committee's eighth hearing on the topic.

At a hearing on NPOESS two years ago I asked the questions 'how did we get here?' and 'where do we go from here?' At last year's hearing I asked 'where are we going?' Unfortunately, I still don't have an answer to that question. Nearly two years after the President reorganized the program, we still do not have a baseline. As GAO will state in their testimony, "it is still not clear what the programs will deliver, when, and at what cost." This is despite the fact that the NASA Authorization Act of 2005 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 requires

both NASA and NOAA to provide program baselines. NOAA contends that they cannot develop a credible baseline for costs and capabilities without a stable and predictable budget horizon. On the other hand, Congress remains skeptical of entrusting the taxpayers money with a program that has proven to be a poor steward of scarce resources without having firm cost, schedule and performance metrics to hold the program accountable to.

I look forward to working with the Administration as we move forward. As I've said at previous hearings, every American is impacted by this program whether they know it or not. It is our responsibility to ensure that the farmers, fisherman, war-fighters, and everyday commuters continue to receive weather and climate information. But we must not forget to be good stewards of taxpayers' money as well.

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