

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*An Overview of the Fiscal Year 2012 Research and Development Budget Proposals at the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency*

March 10, 2011

I want to welcome everyone here today for this hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In the first two months of the year, the President made two important praiseworthy announcements. He called for a review of unnecessary regulations, such as those under which the benefits don't justify the costs or those not grounded in sound science.

Then he announced during his State of the Union speech that he would be willing to eliminate whatever spending we can honestly afford to do without.

The President has followed those announcements by proposing a budget with over a trillion dollars in deficit spending and pushing a bevy of job-killing regulations without heed to current economic conditions. In light of his stated priorities, the President's actions on the budget and regulations are appearing to be empty promises.

The President's FY2012 budget request for NOAA contains few surprises, but several concerns. The Administration has proposed the largest reorganization in NOAA history in order to create a new Climate Service. As I said at last year's budget hearing, I am not supportive of this change and concerned it has not been properly vetted by Congress.

I do however want to acknowledge to the Administrator that I appreciate that this proposal was made through the budget process this year. This is the regular order I was requesting a year ago.

Nevertheless, this Committee has not yet had the opportunity to fully examine the implications of transitioning fundamental climate research into an operational office. Until and unless Congress reviews and approves this proposal, I expect NOAA to continue to operate as it did prior to the February 2010 announcement. There should be no changes in the existing management matrix, no changes in decision-making or reporting lines within the line offices, and no authorities changed under the guise of transition.

Another area of the President's budget that concerns me is the proposed increases for the Joint Polar Satellite System.

This Committee has been engaged in the oversight of this program since it was a dysfunctional, tri-agency mess subject to recertification under Nunn-McCurdy.

It has been more than a year since the Office of Science and Technology Policy proposed splitting this program into two elements: one controlled by NOAA and NASA, and a separate one controlled by the Department of Defense. In all this time, we still have not seen how the division of this program has worked to reduce the risk of a potential gap in weather and climate data. Furthermore, we have still not seen the baseline cost estimates of these two separate programs. I look forward to hearing from the Administrator on this subject.

On our second panel, we will hear about EPA's FY2012 research and development budget request. We are all well aware of the great impact that EPA regulatory actions can have. Often overlooked in this debate, however, is agency process and how it affects the quality of the underlying science that these regulations are based on. That is the purview of this committee and an issue I'm committed to pursuing in further detail.

For example, since our last EPA budget hearing, more information has come to light that the science used to justify the finding that carbon dioxide is a danger to public health or welfare is not as solid as was originally claimed. The numerous admitted mistakes, questionable data sets and lack of transparency in the process has only intensified the questions and doubts that this decision was made as a result of politics instead of science.

Unfortunately, climate is not the only area in which EPA science is a concern. I was very disappointed with the release of the draft hydraulic fracturing study. The questions EPA posed to answer would hardly be helpful to a decision-maker. The study is focused on the impact possibilities of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water, without ever looking at the probabilities of such an impact occurring. It seems about as useful as studying the *possible* impacts of getting hit by a bus without ever considering the *probability* of such an event occurring within existing laws and when simple precautionary steps are taken. Accordingly I look forward to hearing further from EPA on the factors driving its hydraulic fracturing study.

There is a lot of work to be done to put our country back on the right track, and the President's budget request is not the roadmap that will get us there.

I now recognize Ranking Member Johnson for five minutes for an opening statement.