

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING

Subcommittee on Energy and Environment GAO's Report on the Status of NOAA's Geostationary Weather Satellite Program

October 23, 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 Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites-R series (GOES-R). This hearing continues close oversight of this vital weather satellite program, oversight that started under Republican leadership of this Committee.

Last September, the Government Accountability Office came before the Science Committee to report on the status of the GOES-R series procurement. GAO also made recommendations on how to proceed so as to avoid any further cost overruns while ensuring that technological development stays on schedule.

More than one year later, we are meeting again with witnesses from GAO and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to discuss the status of the GOES-R program. However, there are disagreements this time around about GAO's assessment of where program development stands. I look forward to hearing if and why NOAA disagrees with GAO's assessment that the project costs will be nearly \$2 billion more than last year's outlook, and why the satellites may not be ready for launch until as late as 2017.

I'm particularly concerned that possible launch delays will result in discontinuity of valuable forecasting data. If GOES-R fails to launch until 2017, and doesn't come online until 2019, will NASA, NOAA, and weather forecasters lose access to the information they need to accurately predict and observe storms?

Those of us responsible for this program, Congress, NOAA, and NASA, cannot lightly risk delays and cost overruns. GOES-R today is a \$6.9 billion program for two satellites. 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 ensure the most accurate possible weather forecasting and modeling.

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