

Opening Statement

Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN)
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Mark-Up: H.R. 5450,
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act of 2006

June 14, 2006

Mr. Chairman, I believe it was about one year ago that we marked up and reported this bill under the number H.R. 50.

Since that time, several situations relating to NOAA have come to our attention. Thus, several of my Members have amendments to further improve this bill.

I believe it is important to get this legislation right. The Organic Act for the Agency must include the tools the Agency needs today and into the future to allow this agency to grow and change as needed to serve our resource needs as our nation grows and changes.

NOAA is currently experiencing serious problems with the procurement of its new polar satellite series. The long-term implications of the cost overrun and schedule delay in this program are likely to impact all other NOAA programs for years to come.

Rep. Udall has an amendment to offer that will address this problem for future procurements as we continue to work together to find a solution for the current NPOESS program.

As in the case of H.R. 50, this bill does not include important authorities and functions in fisheries, coastal zone management, ocean mapping and charting, and a number of other important operations that are in the jurisdiction of the Committee on Resources. Until our colleagues complete their work, we will not have a true Organic Act for NOAA.

I understand you will not be supporting all of our amendments today. I regret that - especially in the case of the amendment to be offered by Rep. Miller which would ensure that open scientific dialog and debate is standard operating procedure at NOAA. I look forward to a constructive debate on this amendment as we proceed this morning.

We thank you for this second opportunity to further improve this legislation. We look forward to working with you and our colleagues on the Committee on Resources as this bill continues through the legislative process.