# Coalition of Geospatial Organizations

Testimony of Jeff Lovin, CP, PS
COGO Chairman
before the
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
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on
H.R. 916 and H.R. 1604

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, I am Jeff Lovin, a professional surveyor and certified photogrammetrist with Woolpert, a geospatial firm headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio. It is my honor to serve this year as Chairman of the Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO), an umbrella coalition of the leading national non-profit societies and associations in the geospatial field. COGO is comprised of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CAGIS), GIS Certification Institute (GISCI), International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO), Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS), National Society for Professional Surveyors (NSPS), National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC), University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS), United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF), and Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA).

COGO is deeply concerned about the governance and land information issues H.R. 1604 and H.R. 916 seek to address. H.R. 1604, the "Map It Once, Use It Many Times Act", introduced by Rep. Lamborn, would establish the National Geospatial Technology Administration within the United States Geological Survey to enhance the use of geospatial data, products, technology, and services, to increase the economy and efficiency of Federal geospatial activities. H.R. 916, the "Federal Land Asset Inventory Reform Act of 2013", introduced by Rep. Kind and Rep. Bishop of UT, would improve Federal land management, resource conservation, environmental protection, and use of Federal real property, by requiring the Secretary of the Interior to develop a multipurpose cadastre of Federal real property and identifying inaccurate, duplicate, and out-of-date Federal land inventories.

In recent years, there has been explosive growth in the use of geospatial data in the U.S. economy. The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC)'s 2006 Annual Report noted that as much as 90% of government information has a geospatial information component. The Geospatial Information and Technology Association reported that up to 80% of the information managed by business is connected to a specific location. While a 1993 survey by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) found total annual geospatial expenditures in Federal agencies alone was close to $4 billion, there is no current, accurate accounting of the government's annual investment. A recent study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimated that at

least $30 billion is generated by geospatial-related companies annually. The geospatial sector has steadily increased by 35% a year, with the commercial side growing at an incredible rate of 100% annually. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that the geospatial sector is one of the three technology areas that will create the most jobs in the coming decade.

Despite this extraordinary growth and the near-ubiquitous presence of geospatial data in government and the private sector, the federal government, including Congress, does not have a consolidated or effective structure for oversight and coordination of geospatial activities. More than 40 federal agencies are engaged in geospatial activities and responsibility for oversight and authorization of Federal geospatial activities is spread among more than 30 House and Senate committees and subcommittees.

Geospatial activities have benefited from oversight by Congress and the Executive Branch on a bipartisan basis. The following are a few highlights:

- Executive Order 12906, "Coordinating Geographic Data Acquisition and Access: The National Spatial Data Infrastructure", was issued by President Clinton on April 11, 1994. This created the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) as a strategic investment of the Federal government and established the Department of the Interior (DOI) as the lead agency in the FGDC.
- A National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report, requested by Congress, was released in January, 1998. "Geographic Information for the 21st Century Building-A Strategy for the Nation" called for a reorganization of the Executive Branch agencies in order to improve coordination within the Federal government and with state and local government, the private sector, and the academic community.
- Two hearings were held in 2003 and 2004 by the Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census of the House Committee on Government Reform. These hearings identified the challenges and shortcomings of current Federal geospatial coordination. This subcommittee was later disbanded.
- At the request of the House Subcommittee, the Government Accountability Office investigated Federal geospatial activities and reported "efforts have not been fully successful in reducing redundancies in geospatial investments" and "federal agencies are still independently acquiring and maintaining potentially duplicative and costly data sets and systems. Until these problems are resolved, duplicative geospatial investments are likely to persist."
- In response to these hearings and the GAO report, the Bush Administration established a "Geospatial Line of Business" initiative. However, it has not been able to accurately account for annual Federal geospatial expenditures.
- In 2008, DOI Secretary Dirk Kempthorne established the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) to "provide advice and recommendations related to management of Federal and national geospatial programs, the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure, and the implementation of Office of Management and Budget Circular A-16 and Executive Order 12906".
- In July of 2009, the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing entitled "Federal Geospatial Data Management." This subcommittee identified that the Federal government spends billions of dollars each year to acquire and manage geospatial data, which go into making maps for consumers, state and local officials, and emergency responders, among others. The subcommittee also found that

DOI has estimated that up to half of the Federal investment in geospatial data is redundant. The subcommittee examined how the Federal government manages the geospatial activities of its various agencies, and how information sharing between Federal, state, and local governments, and between the public and private sectors, can be improved.

- Also in July 2009, the Congressional Research Service published a report, “Issues Regarding a National Land Parcel Database”, highlighting the “organizational challenges” and reporting “a coordinated approach to federally managed parcel data did not exist.”
- In August 2009 and June 2010, OMB published memos on “place-based” policies, more appropriately referred to as “geospatial”. Within these memos, these policies sought to leverage investments by focusing resources in targeted places and drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated action. Effective geospatial policies can influence how rural and metropolitan areas develop, how well they function as places to live, work, operate a business, preserve heritage, and more. Such policies can also streamline otherwise redundant and disconnected programs. Between now and 2050, the expected population growth – of nearly 140 million people – will require, among other things, the construction of more than 200 billion square feet of new housing, business space, and retail development and major new investments in all forms of physical infrastructure. The new construction will constitute an estimated two thirds of all development on the ground in 2050.
- In May 2012, the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing entitled "Federal Geospatial Spending, Duplication and Land Inventory Management". This hearing covered the importance of updating Federal land mapping practices for job creation, additional use of public lands and scientific advancements. The hearing also focused on the Federal government’s mapping and geospatial management programs including Federal data reliability and management. Advances in mapping technology and demands for mapping products have created greater demand in the Federal government for geospatial services. However, the coordination between agencies often fails to produce the best information or value for various constituencies and stakeholders. Frequently, multiple Federal agencies will request mapping of the same area at the same time, wasting Federal resources, and taxpayer dollars.
- GAO issued a report, “Geospatial Information: OMB and Agencies Need to Make Coordination a Priority to Reduce Duplication”, GAO-13-94, on November 26, 2012 and it has further addressed geospatial duplication and lack of coordination in its 2013 Annual Report, “Actions Needed to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits”, GAO-13-279SP, April 9, 2013.

This chronology demonstrates how the oversight, coordination, efficiency and utilization of geospatial data can enhance the quality of life of the American people. A better management and governance structure in the Executive Branch, and the establishment of a subcommittee in the House and Senate, respectively, with primary jurisdiction over geospatial activities, are needed.

COGO has been deeply involved in efforts to create a national parcel system, as envisioned in the landmark 1980 National Academy of Sciences report “Need for a Multipurpose Cadastre” and its 2007 report, “National Land Parcel Data: A Vision for the Future”. The 2007 report endorsed the FLAIR Act. A committee of COGO, overseeing this issue, has been deeply

concerned by the slow pace at which the federal government has been implementing the Academy's reports and recommendations and believes the nation would be well served by more prompt action.

One bright spot is the progress made on the three dimensional elevation program, or "3DEP", lead by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). This is an example of a strategic and coordinated approach to a national geospatial requirement. Operating under authority of the USGS Organic Act of March 3, 1879 (20 Stat. 394; 43 U.S.C. 31), the Act of October 2, 1888 (25 Stat. 505, 526), and the language in the FEMA flood map reform provisions enacted in the MAP-21 Act, section 100220 of PL 112-141, that calls for USGS to participate in an innovative, coordinated funding pool for the collection of elevation data for flood mapping and other purposes, USGS has launched the 3DEP program. The USGS is using its Geospatial Products and Services Contract (GPSC) as the acquisition vehicle for the collection of LIDAR and IFSAR data for the 3DEP program. USGS is working with states and other federal agencies to increase the area in which data is collected and to reduce duplication. COGO supported the President's FY 14 budget request for 3DEP, which has been approved by the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. I would point out that GPSC is a contracting program that follows the COGO-endorsed geospatial data acquisition principles, which are also consistent with provisions in H.R. 1604 and H.R. 916.

Enhanced elevation data for the Nation will stimulate economic growth, while improving health and security. Federal leadership will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the activity as a whole.

In 2012, a study funded by the USGS and its partners identified that important benefits from enhanced elevation data totaling up to an estimated $13 billion annually would accrue to 602 mission-critical activities of 34 Federal agencies; the 50 States; and selected local and tribal government, private, and other organizations.

3DEP will satisfy the extensive demand for consistent, high-quality topographic data and other three-dimensional representations of the Nation's natural and constructed features. COGO is confident that appropriate and desirable federal leadership through the 3DEP will result in significantly improved protection and management of water resources; better identification, delineation, risk characterization, mitigation and post-event recovery of natural hazard areas; improved management and discovery of energy and mineral resources; more efficient efforts in agriculture, landscape restoration, transportation, and construction; as well as improving insights into our natural heritage.

H.R. 1604 and H.R. 916 would provide specific authorization for 3DEP, implement some recommendations of the parcel report, and better coordinate federal geospatial activities. These are consistent with COGO priorities. As these bills move through the legislative process, COGO would like to offer specific recommendations for improvement. We look forward to working with the subcommittee and the bill's sponsors in that effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.