



## COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE SPACE & TECHNOLOGY REPUBLICANS

### **Opening Statement of Space & Aeronautics Subcommittee Ranking Member Brian Babin**

Joint Space & Aeronautics and Environment Subcommittees Hearing – Looking Back to  
Predict the Future: The Next Generation of Weather Satellites

*September 21, 2022*

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Thank you for holding today's hearing, Mr. Chairman.

One of this Committee's top priorities in recent years has been improving the accuracy of weather forecasting in the United States. NOAA's short and long-term weather forecasts utilize data from several sources, including a fleet of satellites orbiting above.

These satellites, in polar and geostationary orbit, provide needed observations of the Earth system that are vital in the development our weather forecasts as well as monitoring and preparing extreme weather events.

NOAA partners with NASA for the acquisition and development of these satellites. NOAA establishes its requirements and NASA issues contracts to develop these satellites within budget and ensure they meet the technical specifications laid out by NOAA. NASA is responsible for the launch of these satellites and then turns over responsibility for operations to NOAA.

Though NOAA still has one more geostationary satellite to launch in 2024, the agency has laid out its initial plans for the next generation of geostationary satellites, which will be known as the Geostationary Extended Observation System, or more commonly known as GeoXO (pronounced Geo-X-O).

At the same time, NOAA is continuing the deployment of its polar satellites through the Joint Polar Satellite System, with the next satellite, JPSS-2, scheduled for launch in November.

Though these systems are currently working well, that was not always the case. A previous system of polar-orbiting weather satellites to be developed in partnership Department of Defense known as NPOESS (In-pose) was cancelled due to cost overruns, technical challenges, and schedule delays.

Additionally, the recently launched GOES-T satellite was delayed by more than 18 months due to a needed redesign of its Advanced Baseline Imager (ABI) due to technical issues experienced by its predecessor, GOES-S.

Both GAO and the Department of Commerce's Inspector General have engaged in extensive reviews of NOAA's development process for its fleet of weather satellites and have offered a number of recommendations for how best to improve that process.

Today's hearing should focus on how well NOAA has implemented these recommendations in the development of the current fleet of satellites as well what lessons still must be applied to the next generation of weather satellites. This Committee has a responsibility to ensure that taxpayers dollars are spent in the most responsible manner possible and we are getting the highest value from these satellites.

As we consider how best to maximize the use of taxpayer dollars, we must continue to explore ways the federal government can partner with the private sector to provide critical data. We have seen tremendous growth in the capabilities of the commercial satellite industry in recent years.

The Weather Act, sponsored by Ranking Member Lucas, and the PROSWIFT Act both contained pilot programs that allowed NOAA to purchase data from commercial sources. We have seen the commercial sector willing and able to provide data to NOAA.

In fact, NOAA recently announced a second request for radio occultation data from commercial weather satellites. Additionally, the agency announced that three companies have received contracts to provide space weather data to the agency. As we look ahead to the next generation of NOAA's weather satellites, we should consider how we can continue to leverage the innovation and resources of the private sector as we work to provide the best weather forecasts possible.

I want to thank our panel of witnesses for appearing before us today. I look forward to a productive discussion on this important topic.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.