



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Gabe Amo (D-RI) of the Environment Subcommittee

Environment Subcommittee Hearing:

*“From Orbit to Operations:
How Weather Satellites Support the National Security Mission”*

January 13, 2026

Along with Chairman Franklin, I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today to discuss the importance of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s satellites and how we can improve the interagency partnership between NOAA and the Department of Defense.

NOAA’s environmental satellite programs play a critical role in collecting and disseminating Earth observation data. Everyone relies on this data — from the public, private, and academic sectors to federal agencies like the Defense Department.

It is no secret that the more data we have access to, the better we can prepare for and respond to extreme weather events. But, its utility doesn’t end there. This data helps farmers know when to plant and harvest their crops, airplanes navigate the skies, and ships traverse dangerous seas.

NOAA didn’t notify Congress that it was going to modify its plan for the next generation of geostationary satellites. Nope. We had to learn the news from leaks.

We learned that NOAA cancelled several satellite instruments and reduced the number of satellites from three to two. It’s not clear how these cuts will ensure the new generation of satellites has more capabilities than the current program.

This Committee has held oversight hearings on NOAA’s weather satellite programs in the past when they faced delays or rising costs. Now, the situation is even more dire. We must conduct oversight into the possibility that critical data will be lost due to the Trump administration’s political and ideological motivations. That is extremely troubling.

The claim that the bulk of the next generation of satellite capabilities were cancelled due to so-called “cost constraints” doesn’t hold water. How do I know? Because those decisions were made before any Congressional input on the budget.

I want to be crystal clear that NOAA's mission goes beyond just weather research and predictions. NOAA must "understand and predict changes in climate, weather, ocean, and coasts." That's a quote from the NOAA website! I think Members on both sides of the aisle would agree with that mission.

Someone else agrees: Dr. Steve Volz, the longtime Assistant Administrator of NESDIS. Dr. Volz has been an expert in this field for decades. He's a highly respected public servant. Under different circumstances, he would be sitting on this witness panel before us today. But NOAA political leadership placed him on Administrative Leave last July without cause or explanation. He's still on Administrative Leave today. His sidelining is a tremendous loss for the agency. It's yet another example of this administration's hostility to civil servants and scientific expertise.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter that Dr. Volz submitted to the Committee for today's hearing.

I want to emphasize that he is submitting this letter to Congress in his personal capacity as a citizen and an acknowledged expert. He does not claim to represent the agency in his comments.

What he is telling us is very concerning. In his letter, Dr. Volz writes that "the most significant new threats" to NOAA's satellite data are "proposals by the Agency current leadership." He states that the cancelled upgrades I mentioned earlier "will stall progress in critical areas and will lead to reductions in overall system and mission performance." He warns of "significant risks" in the push to expand NOAA's commercial data purchases. And he highlights the absurdity of this administration's push to create an artificial distinction between "weather observations" and other environmental observations. There is none. That is politics, not science. Dr. Volz is a voice we should be listening to, not marginalizing.

Today's hearing will be a valuable opportunity to discuss these concerns.

I cannot stress enough the importance of NOAA satellites providing uninterrupted environmental observations. Any potential satellite launch delay or information degradation could be devastating to national security, the economy, and most importantly, public safety. Human lives are on the line.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today about the importance of NOAA's observation capabilities.

Thank you. I yield back.