



**NOAA/NWS Leadership Storms out of Meeting  
After NWSEO Refuses to assist in Developing a Plan to Eliminate ITO Positions**

(March 8, 2012) On Wednesday, March 7, NWSEO President Dan Sobien, Vice President Bill Hopkins, union counsel and several ITOs met with NOAA Deputy Administrator Kathryn Sullivan, NWS Director Jack Hayes, and other members of the NOAA and NWS leadership team to discuss the Administration's proposal to eliminate the 122 Information Technology Officers at the WFOs. NWSEO came seeking an explanation of how the NWS's plan to have 24 employees do the work – from a distance - currently performed by 122 ITOs was technically feasible, and was prepared to brief Deputy Administrator Sullivan on why it was not. In recent testimony and submissions to Congress, NOAA has claimed that “with technological improvements, such as Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System, NWS has gained the ability to fulfill much of the Information Technology Officer responsibilities remotely.”

Sullivan said that the purpose of the meeting was not to provide NWSEO with an opportunity to discuss the shortcomings of the agency's plans, but rather to provide NWSEO with an opportunity to *assist the agency in developing* the plans to perform the ITOs' work remotely. Management explained that it would only be willing to let NWSEO provide such input if the union agreed not to criticize the agency's efforts to eliminate the ITOs in the media, or to continue to lobby in Congress to retain the ITO jobs.

In response, NWSEO explained to Sullivan and the other agency representatives that they misunderstood the purpose of a union – which is to fight to preserve jobs- not to assist management in eliminating them. NWSEO said that it would continue to lobby Congress to keep jobs and to discuss the matter with the press.

At this point in the meeting, Dr. Sullivan jumped from her chair, raised her voice and accused NWSEO of insulting her. She abruptly said that the meeting was over and began to storm out of the room in a rage. NWSEO responded by saying that *it* had been insulted if the agency thought that we were going to agree to give up employees' jobs, and that NWSEO had been better treated by the political leadership of NOAA during the Bush Administration who never walked out of a meeting with NWSEO even when the parties disagreed.

Management asked NWSEO, a second time, if it would agree not to criticize the agency's plans in the media or before Congress. NWSEO responded that if the union thought the agency's plans were unfeasible or would endanger the public it certainly intended to alert Congress and the media.

Sullivan then hastily led the management representatives out of the room to caucus. After a long hiatus, they returned and said that the agency would now develop its plan to eliminate the

ITOs on its own and would not discuss the matter with NWSEO or answer any of its questions until after Congress approves its request to eliminate the ITOs. Sullivan then said that the meeting was over and stormed out, followed by Jack Hayes and the other agency representatives.

The bottom line- NWS and NOAA do NOT yet know on how it can regionalize the work of the ITOs, and acted erratically when NWSEO would not help them develop a plan to do so.

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