



Senate Commerce Committee Tells NWS to Keep the ITOs

(May 10, 2012) The Senate Commerce Committee has officially objected to the NWS's plans to eliminate the ITOs - In a recent letter from the Commerce Committee to the Senate Budget Committee, the Committee Chairman Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WVA) wrote:

“The administration has requested \$792.2 million for NWS in FY 2013, reflecting a net decrease of \$19.7 million (2 percent) compared to FY 2012’s funding level. The budget proposes a series of operational reductions that are likely to degrade the specificity and quality of local forecasts and severe storm and weather warnings. This includes a reduction in staff capacity at Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) around the Nation, proposing to replace 122 local Information Technology Officers with 24 regional officers at centralized locations. However, the software backbone of forecasting offices’ forecasts and warnings known as “AWIPs” resides locally on each local server rather than at a central location, and the Information Technology Officer role involves adapting the AWIPs software to localized needs and weather conditions. It is the Committee’s understanding that the majority of employees serving the Information Technology Officer role are also trained meteorologists who assist the local forecasting office in delivering weather information during weather and natural disaster emergencies. While the Committee is aware of varying levels of capacity at the forecasting stations, the reduction in staff appears likely to result in a decrease in the quality and specificity of localized weather forecasts. At a time when the nation has experienced a record setting number of billion dollar plus weather disasters, the Committee hopes the Administration will reevaluate this particular cost-cutting proposal.”

NWSEO is working diligently to keep the ITO position in the nation’s 122 WFOs. We will keep you informed of progress on this issue and all other labor-related issues at www.nwseo.org and through our Four Winds newsletters. If you are a NWSEO member and are not receiving the Four Winds via email, please send your private email address to NWSEO Director of Communications, Lisa Luciani at mediarelations@nwseo.org.

Members can also stay apprised of current NWSEO news on our National Weather Service Employees Organization Facebook Group at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/nwseo/>. Members find it as a way to have your comments “heard,” discuss issues, and get questions answered. NWSEO President Dan Sobien and Vice President Bill Hopkins are part of the group and often participate

in the discussions. This is a closed group for NWSEO members only. You can also follow NWSEO on Twitter!

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