



NOAA Leadership's Mismanagement of Funds May Result in Furloughs of all NWS Agency Employees

(June 7, 2012) The National Weather Service has proposed to furlough all agency employees for 13 working days in FY 2012 due to a \$26 million dollar budget shortfall. The NWS notified NWSEO today about the furloughs and included a [Reprogramming Fact Sheet](#).

“National Weather Service employees are paying for the mistakes of the agency’s leadership,” said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. “Their misguided plan to furlough all agency employees is another example of the short-sighted thinking that has put them in such dire straits.”

Background on the budget shortfall:

In 2010 and 2011, NOAA and DOC received complaints that personnel in the NWS were allegedly misallocating funds. These complaints were not acted upon.

In July 2011, a complaint to the Inspector General was relayed to NOAA and the agency appointed Dr. Sullivan and Hari Sastry to lead a NOAA investigation (not an IG investigation). A review of the NWS budgetary process revealed that the NWS improperly reprogrammed funds and may have violated the Anti-Deficiency Act. The investigation also found a failure of management and oversight of NWS leadership.

The bottom line is that for years, NOAA, DOC and OMB were not requesting enough money to keep field operations running. Instead, in order to keep the lights on, it appears that NWS officials may have changed accounting codes to other non-local warnings and forecasts portions of the budget (AWIPS, Weather Radio, and more) to pay for field operations. NWS does not have enough money to run field operations. DOC has asked Congress for a reprogramming of the NWS and for a smaller amount of funds from other NOAA lines totaling \$35 million (\$26 million for local warnings and forecasts and \$9 million for dual pol).

The NOAA investigation included several recommendations for changes in the NWS management structure (including a review of the structure and function of the NWS Corporate Board) and management training. The report also states that no one in the NWS CFO Office or NWS leadership was ever trained in reprogramming money. The decision mandates an audit of NWS spending back to 2006.

NWSEO was not provided with the investigative report. Instead, our information comes from the Decision Memorandums. These Decision Memorandums make it sound like

the NWS was covering up the deficit by illegally moving money around and do not show any fault on NOAA. "I find it highly unlikely that this is a NWS cover-up," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. "What else does the NOAA CFO Office do if not monitor and supervise their line office CFOs? The NWS structural deficit has been well known for years."

NWSEO General Counsel Richard Hirn was interviewed on Federal News Radio last week. His interview provides a very complete and accurate summary of these events. To listen, visit: <http://www.federalnewsradio.com/86/2884385/In-Depth-interviews---May-30> Scroll down to Richard Hirn's name and click the arrow.

"For years, NWSEO warned Congress that the NWS budget was underfunded," Sobien added. "Now that the misappropriations have come to light, we need to work together to make sure NWS gets fully funded."

The furloughs may be avoided if Congress and the Department of Commerce agree on a source for reprogramming funds. Friends of NWSEO in Congress have asked Secretary Bryson to look for other sources within DOC for funds to reprogram to the NWS rather than further cutting other essential NWS programs. NWSEO has also learned that the NWS completed drafting the reprogramming request by mid-February, but DOC and OMB delayed submission to Congress for over three months - which added to the current crisis. NWSEO's lobbyist has spent most of this and the past week on Capitol Hill educating lawmakers about the nature and extent of NWS's funding problems.

NWSEO is reaching out to our political supporters to make sure the NWS receives full funding in 2013. In light of recent events, this year we need your support more than ever. We are asking for your help. During office discussions, please remind non-members of the work NWSEO is doing.

Most often union members hear information before their managers do from the very active private Facebook group at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/nwseo/>. Please encourage your co-workers to join the union. It will help our efforts and provide them access to the NWSEO Facebook group. Recruitment information and talking points are available at <http://www.nwseo.org/Recruitment.php> and an [1187](#) is available there too. We need the strength of membership this year.

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