



Senate, House Reject NOAA's Plans to Eliminate ITOs and Approve Additional Funding for NWS Operations

(June 6, 2014) On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee joined the House of Representatives in approving more funding for the National Weather Service than requested by the Administration, and in rejecting the Administration's ill-informed proposal to eliminate the Information Technology Officers at each WFO. This marks the third year in a row that NWSEO has achieved a legislative victory against the Administration's efforts to further reduce NWS field staff.

The Report of the Senate Appropriations Committee contains stinging language rejecting the agency's proposal to eliminate the ITOs:

"For the third year in a row, the Committee does not support the budget request to eliminate Information Technology Officer positions at the forecast offices around the country. This repeated request continues to ignore the Committee's direction to provide perspective on how this proposal fits within NWS's broader workforce and modernization plans. The Committee also notes that NOAA has not provided the report requested in fiscal year 2014 outlining a multi-phase plan for consolidating NWS's information technology operations that would streamline system configuration, shore up existing cybersecurity vulnerabilities, contribute to the expedited rollout of Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System, and achieve cost savings while resulting in no degradation of service."

The full House of Representatives approved continued funding of the ITO positions last month. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved an additional \$28 million in funding for NWS operations than was requested by the President. This amount includes \$10 million to continue paying the salaries of the ITOs. The House has approved an additional \$16 million in funding for NWS operations above that requested by the President, and this difference will be resolved later "in conference" between the House and Senate. The Senate Appropriations Committee explains in its report why it approved additional funding for the NWS:

"Weather forecasting does more than tell people if an umbrella is needed. Severe weather warnings save lives by telling us when to seek shelter or evacuate from serious storms, tornadoes, and hurricanes. In 2013, there were seven major weather and climate disasters estimated to cost more than \$1,000,000,000 each. While warning times for severe weather continue to improve, more can be done to give Americans time to get out of harm's way. Weather forecasts do not originate from local TV stations or a smartphone app. Forecasts are generated using satellite and radar data, ocean monitoring, modeling, and human expertise provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]. The Committee continues to prioritize resources to

ensure NOAA has the staff and technology to provide timely and accurate warnings and lengthen the amount of time before a storm that the public receives these warnings.”

The Senate Appropriations Committee also recommended that the NWS collocate its WFOs with its customers and partners when leases expire. NWSEO has strongly supported this concept for many years because it raises the NWS’s profile at the local level and makes it less likely that the NWS or NOAA would be able to close a WFO in the future. The Committee report reads:

“The Committee recommends that, wherever possible, NWS co-locate its local or regional facilities with established universities, emergency management offices, and private sector atmospheric research entities that have forecast capabilities for atmospheric events, placing priority on developing more accurate and timely warnings and forecasts of high impact weather events that endanger life and property. Fiscal year 2015 funds may be used for the planning, design, and long-term co-location lease agreements, with priority given the States most impacted by recent extreme weather events where current leases may be expiring.”

The Senate Appropriations Committee is aware of the problems with NOAA’s Office of Workforce Management. The Committee wrote: “within the increased funds for Corporate Services, NOAA is directed to focus on restoring the functionality of its Workforce Management Office.”

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National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.