



NWSEO Lobbying Brings Full Funding to National Weather Service and Aircraft Operations Center

(November 18, 2011) On Thursday, November 17, Congress approved final passage of the FY 2012 Department of Commerce Appropriations Act that contains full funding for the National Weather Service, despite substantial cuts to most other NOAA programs and offices. The final amount approved for NWS operations, research and facilities is \$23.5 million, a 3 percent increase over fiscal year 2011. Funding for the operations of every other line office in NOAA was cut between 2% to 10%. The bipartisan and bicameral support for funding the NWS is the result of NWSEO's lobbying and public communications activities.

The amount approved for NWS operations was \$6 million more than requested by the Obama Administration. However, because Congress rejected the Administration's request to move the Climate Prediction Center to a new NOAA line office, the National Climate Service, the operations of the CPC (\$13.7 million) must continue to be funded out of the NWS budget. Because that cost was not included in the President's budget request for the NWS, the NWS will effectively receive about \$7-\$8 million less than requested by the President.

NWSEO also obtained restoration of full funding for the NOAA Aircraft Operations Center in Tampa – whose civilian employees are represented by NWSEO. The House of Representatives initially cut AOC funding by 40 percent, which would have decimated hurricane reconnaissance and other activities at AOC. NWSEO engaged in a vigorous education campaign in both the House and Senate and obtained universal support for restoration of full funding when the final bill was passed.

NWSEO also succeeded in having language removed from the bill which may have resulted in closure of NWS forecast offices in future years. In its initial version of the bill, the Senate directed the NWS to obtain an outside study from the National Academy of Public Administration to find "efficiencies" in the NWS "field organization." At NWSEO's request, the final language approved by the House and Senate Conference Committee says that the study should look for efficiencies elsewhere in the NWS – not just the field organization; that the committee that conducts the study should consult with emergency managers and the union; that any recommendations cannot result in a degradation or reduction in services provided to the communities served by the WFOs and RFCs nor can the recommendations place the public at greater risk; and that the study

should be delayed until the National Academy of Science completes its on-going study of the NWS modernizations and makes recommendations for the future of the NWS.

-NWSEO-