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# Congress of the United States

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Congressman Adam Putnam, Chairman



### OVERSIGHT HEARING STATEMENT BY ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN

**Hearing topic: “Geospatial Information: Are we headed in the right direction or are we lost?”**

How much are we spending? What are the standards? Are we sharing information? Who is operating the compass providing direction to a productive, efficient, and cost-effective destination?”

**Wednesday, June 23, 2004  
2:00 p.m.  
Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building**

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#### OPENING STATEMENT

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Good afternoon and welcome to the Subcommittee’s hearing on “*Geospatial Information: Are we really headed in the right direction or are we lost?*”

This oversight hearing is a follow up to the hearing held on June 10, 2003 entitled “*Geospatial Information: A Progress Report on Improving Our Nation’s Map-Related Data Infrastructure.*” The purpose of today’s hearing is to examine the progress made by the federal government since last year’s hearing to consolidate and improve utilization of the masses of geospatial data collected by departments and agencies across the federal government and by state and local governments. This hearing will focus on government and industry efforts to develop standards for the collection and use of geospatial

information to facilitate cross-agency data sharing. In most cases, information is collected in different formats and standards designed for one specific mission, with inadequate consideration given to subsequent possible intergovernmental data sharing. This results in wasteful redundancies and a reduced ability to perform critical intergovernmental operations.

The hearing will also focus attention on the Geospatial Information One-Stop Initiative, one of the President's key E-Government reforms intended to simplify the process of locating, accessing, sharing and integrating geospatial information in a timely and efficient manner. Further, during this hearing, we will evaluate the important role that the private sector plays in arriving at cost efficiencies and improving geospatial data quality for end users.

This hearing is a continuation of the series of oversight hearings conducted by the Subcommittee during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress to keep federal government agencies and decision-makers aggressively focused on meeting the key goals of the E-Government Act of 2002: greater accessibility to government by citizens and businesses; improving government efficiency and productivity; enhancing customer service; facilitating cross-agency coordination; and tangible cost savings to taxpayers through use of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and proven "best practices" throughout the federal government.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to examine the progress of OMB's oversight of geospatial investments. This hearing also provides an opportunity to examine the cross-agency and intergovernmental coordination and collaboration in the collection, consolidation, maintenance, and sharing of geospatial data and geospatial information systems, sometimes collectively referred to as "GIS".

We need to determine what programs exist across the federal government, how much is being spent on GIS programs, where that money is being spent, if data is shared across the federal government any more efficiently than since our hearing last year, and how the federal government is progressing in its coordination efforts with state and local governments.

To achieve the important goals of coordination and collaboration across the federal government related to the acquisition, use, sharing, and interoperability of geospatial data, the continuing challenge of the development and implementation of data standards and interoperability must be addressed. In most cases, geospatial data is collected in a particular format for one specific mission, with insufficient consideration for subsequent intergovernmental data sharing. That data is useless to other agencies because the data was not collected in a standardized format and is thus not interoperable with data sets other agencies may hold. This is true across the federal government, as well as in states and towns across our country. This results in wasteful redundancies and a reduced ability to perform critical intergovernmental functions. With the development and implementation of the Federal Enterprise Architecture initiative and its corresponding reference models, an additional tool for identifying common business lines and opportunities for collaboration will be available.

I am eager to hear the progress made in this direction by the Geospatial One-Stop initiative, as well as by other agencies and organizations. Not only is Geospatial One-Stop engaged in the standards development process, it is also intended to simplify the

process of locating, accessing, sharing and integrating geospatial information in a timely and efficient manner. I am likewise eager to hear about the progress made on this effort.

While I expect to hear good news in the area of standards development and in developing a portal for the collection and sharing of geospatial data, I understand the news in the area of cross-agency collaboration on the collection and sharing of geospatial data is not so promising. Per my request, GAO prepared a report on the coordination and sharing of geospatial assets. The results are not good. GAO reports that a failure of coordination and oversight efforts have resulted in agencies continuing to independently acquire and maintain potentially duplicative and costly data sets and geospatial information systems. We have much work to do in this arena to eliminate costly redundant spending. Perhaps we need to consider the creation of a central office responsible for the coordination of government-wide geospatial efforts such as a Geospatial Information Office within OMB.

I eagerly look forward to the expert testimony our distinguished panel of leaders in various federal agencies and in industry will provide today.

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