

Coalition of Geospatial Organizations

Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) Urges Congress to Establish Geospatial Subcommittee in House and Senate

Reston, VA, January 09, 2009 - The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) has asked Congress to establish subcommittees in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate with jurisdiction over Federal geospatial activities. In a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), COGO Chairman Cy Smith urged that oversight of geospatial technology be specifically included in the mission of existing Congressional subcommittees.

"The intent of the letter is to designate geospatial activities in the authority of an existing subcommittee in House and Senate, respectively", said Mr. Smith. "We are not attempting to create new stand-alone committees, but we want to make certain that Congress has an effective structure for oversight and legislation over the increasing federal government activity in geospatial technologies, and its relationship with state, regional, local and tribal government, universities and the private sector," Mr. Smith, the COGO Chairman, is the immediate past president of the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) (www.nsgic.org), an association of senior state geographic information system (GIS) managers and coordinators, and is the Oregon State GIS Coordinator.

"Currently, responsibility for oversight and authorization of federal geospatial activities is spread among more than 30 House and Senate committees and subcommittees. More than 40 federal agencies include geospatial activities as part of their mission. That scattered structure is very inefficient and does not contribute to strategic, coordinated policy and investments among the federal agencies. In fact, one of the outcomes of the Byzantine structure currently in place in Congress is the stove-piped structure in the federal agencies," said John Palatiello, Executive Director of MAPPS (www.mapps.org), the association of private geospatial firms and the author of the resolution adopted by COGO to endorse the idea of House and Senate geospatial subcommittees.

COGO requires unanimous agreement of all its 15 voting member organizations to take a policy position. The resolution endorsing Congressional geospatial subcommittees was adopted at COGO's October meeting.

According to the Federal Geographic Data Committee's (FGDC) 2006 Annual Report as much as 90% of government information has a geospatial information component. The U.S. Department of Labor has identified the geospatial field as one of the high growth job sectors in the U.S. economy. A 2004 report of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found "efforts have not been fully successful in reducing redundancies in geospatial investments" and that "OMB's oversight of federal geospatial activities has not been effective because its methods ... are insufficiently developed and have not produced consistent and complete information. As a result of these shortcomings, federal agencies are still independently acquiring and maintaining potentially duplicative and costly data sets and systems. Until these problems are resolved, duplicative geospatial investments are likely to persist."

COGO noted that the Congressional committee structure also contributes to the inefficiencies in the Executive Branch and provided recommendations for two committees in both the House and Senate

with a direct oversight of geospatial activities that could be logical homes for a geospatial subcommittee. They are the House Committee on Natural Resources or the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources or the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) (www.urisa.org/cogo) is a recently formed coalition of 15 national professional societies, trade associations, and membership organizations in the geospatial field, representing more than 30,000 individual producers and users of geospatial data and technology. The coalition's founding Member Organizations are:

- American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM)
- American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS)
- Association of American Geographers (AAG)
- Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CAGIS)
- Geospatial Information Technology Association (GITA)
- GIS Certification Institute (GISCI)
- International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO)
- Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)
- National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)
- University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS)
- Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)

The founding Advisory Organizations are:

- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
- Western Governors Association (WGA)
- American Planning Association (APA)

-30-

To view the COGO letter, go to:

<http://www.urisa.org/files/COGO%20Reid%20Pelosi%20Geospatial%20Subcommittee%20final.pdf>

