



U.S. Representative Don Beyer highlights NWS Vacancies at Hearing on NOAA Satellites GAO Study on NWS Vacancies Begins this Week

(December 15, 2015) If you attended the 2015 NWSEO Annual Convention, you will remember U.S. Representative Don Beyer addressed the convention and expressed his concern for the number of vacancies at NWS field offices across the country. On December 10, Congressman Beyer echoed those concerns at the House Science Committee Hearing on NOAA's satellite program:

“In fact, the capabilities of the National Weather Service are directly dependent on the quality and the success of our satellite programs, as well as, services of a highly skilled workforce. So while it's not the focus of today's hearing, I want to mention some important work the GAO is conducting on behalf of my colleagues Mrs. Bonamici, Mr. Lipinski and me. Specifically, we've been concerned about the number of vacancies that currently exist in the National Weather Service field offices. We've asked GAO to review present and future staffing levels in order to support the agency's efforts, to evolve its operational components, and to increase its decision support services.”

Rep. Beyer's comments are 19:11 minutes into the hearing. You can watch a recording of the hearing at the link below.

<https://science.house.gov/legislation/hearings/subcommittee-environment-and-subcommittee-oversight-hearing-overview-nation-s-0>

The Government Accountability Office begins its study of the staffing levels of National Weather Service forecast offices nationwide this week. The GAO study is the direct result of a request by Ranking Democrats of three Subcommittees of the House Science Committee, U.S. Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA), Dan Lipinski (D-IL), and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR).

The May 8, 2015 formal request for the GAO study explains:

“Although the NWS was fully funded in FY 2014, the number of vacant operational positions at Weather Forecast Offices and national forecasting centers continues to grow. According to reports that the NWS has provided to the National Weather Service Employees Organization, between September 2010 and February 2015 the number of non-supervisory, non-managerial employees at the NWS fell from 3877 to 3469. This is a 10% reduction in workforce that is predominately classified as ‘emergency essential.’”

The Representatives wrote that “it is troubling that this staff drawdown appears to be done randomly as positions become vacant, leaving staffing imbalances in Forecast Offices and River Forecast Centers across the country.” Representatives Lipinski, Bonamici and Beyer also explained that “we have concerns about the NWS intern program. . . .It appears that as many as 85 of the approximately 400 met intern positions are currently vacant. . . This 20% vacancy rate threatens the ability of the NWS to replace retiring forecasters in sufficient numbers.”

The formal request for the GAO study may be found here:

http://nwseo.org/Four_Winds_2015/15_05_08_SenateLtr_to_GAO_NWS_staffing.pdf

NWSEO will keep you posted on the results of the GAO study on NWS staffing as they become available.

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National Weather Service employees.**

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